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HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

OF THE

BRITISH DEPENDENCIES

VOL. VII

$32

INDIA

PART II. HISTORY UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CROWN

BY

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P. E. ROBERTS

FELLOW OF WORCESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD

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HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF INDIA

PART II

CHAPTER I

INDIA UNDER THE CROWN. SETTLEMENT AND PACIFICATION. THE END OF LORD CANNING'S ADMINISTRATION

AFTER the great events, fierce passions, and tremendous problems of the Mutiny, we pass into a comparatively mild and humdrum atmosphere. As government becomes better, history, it is to be feared, grows duller. The victories of the administrator and reformer over their immaterial enemies, corruption, vice, and ignorance, are less apt to strike the imagination than the triumphs of warring armies. Such victories are only won slowly and step by step; there are no stricken fields and few epoch-making dates. Except for the Second Afghan War 1878–80, the Third Burmese War 1885, and the Tirah campaigns 1897–8, there have been only minor military operations in India since 1858. The age has been one of material, moral, and intellectual progress, of improvements in communication, of commercial development, of administrative and legal reforms, and of constitutional experiment. The full effects of these changes it is as yet too early to gauge, and it is fatally easy to fall into an attitude, on the one hand of uncritical admiration, and on the other of captious criticism. Indian officials conscious of the rectitude of their intentions are sometimes apt to write as though British rule in India is, and should be, above criticism; while on the other hand we find so normally

sane a statesman as John Bright committing himself to the monstrous statement that the history of Great Britain in India prior to 1862 was 'a hundred years of crime against the docile natives of our Indian empire'.[1] Between these partisan judgements truth somewhere resides, and the historian must walk warily in quest of her. Further, many of those who played the chief part on the Indian stage are either still living, or have passed away too recently for their work to be finally appraised, and, for the latter part of the period at any rate, to pass non-committal verdicts is not only the fairest and safest but often the only possible course.

The conquest of India within its own natural frontiers was now over. The status of the protected princes was settled and defined. They had rendered valuable services in the Mutiny and were described by Canning as 'breakwaters to the storm which would otherwise have swept over us in one great wave'. To preserve them as bulwarks of the empire has been ever since a main principle of British policy. Henceforward with the integrity of their territories guaranteed and the coveted right of adoption conceded, they had no need to fear incorporation in British dominion through the natural decay of their dynasties. Thus their relations with their suzerain entered on a new phase. They were brought into closer connexion partly by the confidence sprung from their now more assured position, partly by the material links of railways, canals, posts, and telegraphs. The supreme government became at once more sensitive to maladministration in a native state and more loth to impair the position of Indian princes. One instinct often warred with the other. The practical solution gradually worked out was that the Governors-General did everything in their power, by the early education of the chiefs, if possible when the occurrence of minorities gave them the opportunity, by

[1] Speech at Birmingham December 18, 1862.

advice and exhortation in all cases, to guide Indian princes in the path of righteous dealing, and, if they strayed from it, exhausted all the resources of remonstrance and protest before employing drastic measures. If moral suasion finally failed, regency councils were appointed or the administration was temporarily entrusted to a British Resident, or again in extreme cases the reigning monarch was deposed and another member of the dynasty placed upon the throne.

Lord Canning, who had been the last Governor-General appointed by the Company, retained office as the first Viceroy and Governor-General under the Crown. In 1859 he was raised to the rank of an earldom. In completing the work of pacification he reaped the reward of his firm stand for mercy and moderation during the Mutiny. His successor, Lord Elgin, afterwards recorded his opinion that the fact that Canning had refused to listen to the clamour for indiscriminate vengeance, and the abuse in consequence poured upon him, imparted in the eyes of Indians 'to acts which carried justice to the verge of severity the grace of clemency'.[1]

Many of the chiefs and protected princes, who had proved faithful in the Mutiny, received honorary titles and gifts of money or lands. To the Nizam were restored some of the districts yielded up to British control in 1853, and his debts of £500,000 to the British government were remitted. Some tracts of forest-clad land on the frontiers of Oudh were given up to Nepal; Sindhia, the Begam of Bhopal, the Gaikwar of Baroda, and many of the Rajput princes were rewarded by territorial concessions or reductions of tribute, and upon many Indian princes and statesmen were conferred in 1861 knighthoods in the newly instituted order of the Star of India.

An important constitutional change in the working of the

[1] *Letters and Journals of Lord Elgin*, by T. Walrond, C.B., London, 1872, pp. 420–1.

Governor-General's executive council was carried out under Lord Canning. Hitherto the council had acted mainly as a consultative body, every question coming before the whole board and being decided by a majority of votes. One exception had been already made by the appointment of a member of council to deal especially with legal matters, and the principle of differentiation of functions was carried farther by the appointment of two successive financial members of council from England. The Indian Councils Act of 1861 empowered the Governor-General to delegate special business to individual councillors, and henceforward, although at this date[1] the separation of departments was less marked than in the Cabinet at home, the various members of council had each his own portfolio and dealt on his own initiative with all but the most important matters. These were placed before the Governor-General and, if any difference of opinion appeared, were considered by the whole council. The decentralization of business undoubtedly made for efficiency and dispatch, and was described by John Stuart Mill 'as one of the most successful instances of the adaptation of means to ends which political history . . . has yet to show'.

The most pressing problem to be faced after the suppression of the Mutiny was naturally that of the Exchequer. For the years 1857–61 there were deficits realized or anticipated amounting to thirty-six millions—a sum that about equalled the normal annual revenue. To reorganize the Indian finances, James Wilson, formerly Secretary to the Treasury and Vice-President of the Board of Trade, was sent out from England in 1859. He was one of the leading economists of the day, and happily combined wide theoretical knowledge with great practical and administrative ability. Unfortunately he died after holding office for eight months, but his work with some modifications was carried on by

[1] Of late years this separation has been carried very much farther.

Samuel Laing, a member of Parliament, who was sent out to succeed him. Wilson proposed three new taxes, an income tax, a licence duty on trades and professions, and an excise on home-grown tobacco. Only the first of these was ultimately adopted, and that after a heated controversy, which brought about the recall of Sir Charles Trevelyan, a very able administrator, who went somewhat beyond official lengths in his opposition to the supreme government. Wilson established a uniform import tariff of ten per cent., worked out a plan for a government convertible paper currency, and outlined drastic economies in both civil and military expenditure—reforms which were carried to completion by his successor. By means of the saving thus effected and by raising the salt duties Wilson and Laing were enabled to bring about an equilibrium in the finances by 1862—a fine administrative achievement on the part of two men who came to a strange country to meet, under unfamiliar conditions, a position of great difficulty.

Under Lord Canning the Indian government had to deal with certain questions which have some importance from the colonial aspect. About 1850 it was found that Assam and the slopes of the Himalayas were suitable for the cultivation of tea and the Nilgiri Hills for producing coffee. The result was an immigration into India of European planters, and the raising of the question as to the tenure of land in these regions. The land required by the planters was technically 'waste' and belonged to the state. The 'Waste Land Rules' were issued, which legalized the grant to Europeans or others of tracts up to 3,000 acres as freehold property exempt from land-tax on the payment of fixed sums.

Some other internal reforms were carried. The strength of the British army in India was reduced in 1861 to 76,000 men and that of the native army to 120,000. In 1857 universities were established at Calcutta, Bombay, and

Madras on the model of the University of London. The provinces of British Burma, Tenasserim, Pegu, and Arakan were consolidated under one Chief Commissioner, the first to hold the office being Sir Arthur Phayre, whose settlement of the country is one of the most famous chapters in the history of British administration in the East. His early efforts after Dalhousie's conquest of the country had been so successful that during the Mutiny it had been found possible to withdraw British troops from Burma. The old dualism of the Supreme and the *Sadr* courts, representing respectively the jurisdiction of the Crown and the Company, was abolished by the establishment of a High Court in each Presidency. Macaulay's penal code, originally drafted in 1837 and revised by Sir Barnes Peacocke, was finally adopted in 1869.

It has been already shown[1] that the permanent settlement of the land revenues of Bengal carried out by Lord Cornwallis was found to have insufficiently safeguarded the rights of the ryots, or peasant cultivators. The Court of Directors declared in 1858 that 'the rights of the Bengal ryots had passed away *sub silentio*, and they had become, to all intents and purposes, tenants-at-will'. But though a clause in the Regulations of 1793 had empowered the government to take measures to protect the peasants, it was not till 1859 that the Bengal Rent Act—applying also to Agra and the Central Provinces—was passed, which gave a right of occupancy to all cultivators who had possessed certain fields for more than twelve years, and forbade their rents being raised except on definite grounds specified in the Act itself. Ryots in the permanently settled districts, who had held their lands since 1793, were exempted from any increase in their rental for ever. The Act unfortunately resulted in a great increase of litigation in the courts.

At one time a far more epoch-making change was in

[1] *Historical Geography of India*, Part I, p. 230.

prospect which would have amounted to an agrarian revolution throughout the whole of India. In nearly the whole of Bengal, in a part (about one-fourth) of the Madras Presidency, and in a small portion of the United Provinces the land revenue is permanently settled. In the rest of India, or four-fifths of the country, settlements, that is the determination of the annual amount of land-tax or state rent to be paid to government, are revised at various periods—generally of twenty or thirty years. Perpetual controversy has centred round the merits and demerits of these systems. The arguments for and against a permanent settlement have been dealt with in vol. i in the chapter on the administration of Lord Cornwallis. The advantages of periodical settlements are obvious from the point of view of the state, which thereby retains the power of continually intercepting part of the 'unearned increment', and it is maintained that if the settlements are made carefully and for sufficiently long periods, they need not check the development of the land or the prosperity of the people. On the other hand, if a permanent settlement were made universal throughout India, the expense and trouble of continual assessments (which occupy about four to five years in the average province) would be avoided. Further, many high authorities have held that thrift and the sinking of capital in land would be encouraged, and that the evil custom of reducing cultivation, as the settlement periods end, in order to avoid enhancement of the revenue, would cease, and that the greater prosperity of the country and the proportionate increase of wealth taxable in other ways would more than compensate the state for some immediate sacrifice of revenue.

Some even go farther and believe that the terrible mortality in the famines of the last forty years is largely due to the fact that the periodical reassessments, which have in most provinces steadily increased the land revenue, have

left the people too impoverished and weak to tide over the time of scarcity. Now it is undeniable that there have been many instances of over-assessment in the past. This fact rests not only on the assertion of Indian critics of the government but on the considered statements of British administrators who carefully weighed their words. Men like Charles Elliott, Charles Grant, A. Russell, and Colonel Maclean protested against the enhancement of the land revenues in the first settlements of the Central Provinces. Sir Auckland Colvin condemned in 1875 the over-assessments in Bombay, and Sir William Hunter in 1879 said bluntly in the Governor-General's Council that 'the fundamental difficulty of bringing relief to the Deccan peasantry is that the Government assessment does not leave enough food to the cultivator to support himself and his family throughout the year'.

But though we must admit that in some cases over-assessments may have intensified the effects of drought and scarcity, there is no justification for the statement sometimes made that they have caused the famines of recent years. Such an assertion is a grotesque perversion of the truth; it utterly ignores the operation of great natural causes and the fact that in many cases famines have been most severe in districts where assessments have been light, and but lightly felt in districts heavily assessed.

In 1861, however, Colonel Baird Smith, believing that there was a vital connexion between mortality in the case of famines and the settlement system under which the people lived, suggested that the principles of the permanent settlement of Bengal should be extended throughout the whole of India. The proposal was accepted by a majority of the Indian statesmen of the day; Sir William Muir, Sir Bartle Frere, Sir Richard Temple, Samuel Laing, and the Lieutenant-Governors of Bengal and the North-west Provinces were among those who gave their approval. This was an

impressive consensus of expert opinion, and without necessarily admitting that it should have been conclusive, it must be acknowledged that the leaders of the modern Reform Party in India have every right to make it a prominent point in their case. Further, at home the proposed change was earnestly supported by Sir John Lawrence, and in July 1862 the Secretary of State, Sir Charles Wood, made the momentous announcement to the Indian government that the Cabinet had resolved to sanction a permanent settlement of the land revenues in all the provinces of British India. This decision was reaffirmed five years later by another Secretary of State, Sir Stafford Northcote, who declared that the government was prepared to make some sacrifice in regard to revenue 'in consideration of the great importance of connecting the interest of the proprietors of the land with the stability of the British Government'. A lengthy correspondence ensued but nothing was ever done, and the proposal was practically shelved—a result said to have been largely due to Lord Mayo's opposition to the policy. In 1883 the resolution was definitely and formally abandoned.

To complete the history of this proposal of 1862 we have had to overpass for the moment our chronological limits and must now retrace our steps. Lord Canning, whose health had completely broken down owing to his immense exertions in the Mutiny and grief at the death of his wife, resigned office in 1862. He returned to England to die there three months later. His fame stands now far above detraction. In purely intellectual qualities other rulers of British India have surpassed him. He made a few mistakes. In the supreme crisis of India's fate he showed some diffidence and hesitation, but by level-headed coolness, by unremitting toil, and by a splendid tenacity he won his way through to victory. He had literally worked himself to death. In his absorbing devotion to his task, he denied himself both

physical exercise and mental relaxation. Lord Elgin, his successor, records that when he told Canning of his intention to ask two or three of his subordinates to dinner daily that he might learn something of the problems of administration, the retiring Governor-General replied simply, 'I was always so tired by dinner time that I could not speak'.[1] Before his retirement he had, in spite of his cold and reserved manner, lived down his former unpopularity. Slowly and painfully he extorted all men's respect by his unswerving sense of justice, his selfless devotion to duty, the magnanimity and innate nobility of his character. The exacting claims of their high office proved fatal to both the Cannings, father and son alike, and it is fitting that all that is mortal of these two lofty and puissant spirits—the Prime Minister of England and the first Viceroy of British India—should now lie together in Westminster Abbey with their country's supremely honoured dead.

[1] *Letters and Journals of Lord Elgin*, by T. Walrond, C.B., London, 1872, p. 402.

CHAPTER II

LORD ELGIN AND LORD LAWRENCE. OUR RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN

THE new Viceroy, Lord Elgin, had been in his undergraduate days at Christ Church, Oxford, a contemporary and friend of both Dalhousie and Canning. As Governor of Jamaica from 1842 to 1846, and Governor-General of Canada from 1846 to 1854, he had enjoyed wide experience of colonial administration. In both these positions, and in the former immediately, he had succeeded the great Indian statesman, Sir Charles (afterwards Lord) Metcalfe. Appointed in 1857 special envoy and plenipotentiary to China, at the request of Lord Canning but on his own responsibility he had diverted to India, on the outbreak of the Mutiny, troops destined for the Further East, and had conducted the peace negotiations after the Chinese War of 1860. He assumed office in Calcutta in 1862, succeeding in his own words 'to a great man and a great war, with a humble task to be humbly discharged'.[1] Time failed him to display his undoubted abilities in the field of Indian administration, for he died at the hill station of Dharmsala, after a little more than a year of office, in November 1863.

At the time of his death a great danger threatened on the north-west frontier, and the Governor-Generalship was offered to Sir John Lawrence, who had so wide and profound a knowledge of that district and its troublesome peoples. At Sitana on the spurs of the Hindu Kush range, north of

[1] *Letters and Journals of Lord Elgin*, by T. Walrond, C.B., London, 1872, p. 396.

Peshawar and west of the Indus, there had existed since the early part of the nineteenth century a curious colony of Muhammadan fanatics known as the Wahabis. They possessed a kind of recruiting dépôt or agency at Patna in Bengal, and their influence spread far and wide by secret channels throughout India. They formed a rallying point for all fugitives from justice, turbulent Pathans, Afridis, and every wild spirit with a grudge against British rule. They were raided by punitive expeditions in 1853 and 1858, and in the latter year were driven from Sitana, but re-established themselves at Malka in 1861, and again menaced the Punjab in 1863. In that year Sir Neville Chamberlain was sent to coerce them with a force of 6,000, but at the Ambela Pass he was confronted by an army of 15,000. For three weeks the advance was checked and the British force kept on the defensive. The Calcutta Council in alarm was contemplating the fatal course of recalling the expedition, but Sir William Denison, Governor of Madras and acting Viceroy, hastened to Calcutta and, on the advice of Sir Hugh Rose, the Commander-in-Chief, insisted on operations being continued. In December the Wahabis were defeated, and their stronghold Malka was destroyed—three weeks before Sir John Lawrence assumed office in India, in January 1864.

Since his retirement from the Punjab in February 1859, Sir John Lawrence had served as member of the Secretary of State's Council in the India Office, bearing modestly the honours and compliments lavished upon him as the 'saviour of India' and the 'organizer of victory'. In 1860 he had declined the governorship of Bombay. He was a strong, determined, and sagacious man, with a certain noble ruggedness and simplicity of soul, though his character, as Lord Dalhousie noticed, was not without the spur of an honourable ambition. He possessed less genius, culture, personal charm and distinction than his elder brother Henry, who was, in the judgement of Sir Richard Temple, 'one of the most

gifted men whom this generation has seen in India', but he was looked upon as a safer and sounder administrator. He was masterful, somewhat obstinate in temperament, and exacting in his relations with his subordinates, though, if they did him good service, he loyally supported them. He had risen through every grade in the Company's service, and in his case a notable break was made in the tradition—observed since the time of Sir George Barlow—that no Indian civilian should be appointed to the highest post of all. It was long a matter of controversy whether, even in his case, the departure from the rule was justified, and though we may now answer that question unhesitatingly in the affirmative, it is perhaps true to say that by 1863 Lawrence had done his best work, and that his administration as Governor-General rather disappointed—the possibly excessive—expectations formed of it. In internal affairs great progress was made with all those material improvements, railways, canals, and public works, inaugurated by his master Dalhousie and interrupted by the catastrophe of the Mutiny, but there was a certain truth in the criticism that Lawrence had not sufficiently learnt the art of delegating work to his subordinates; that he required more detachment from routine, and was so immersed in details that the general supervision of the administration suffered. Assuredly he never spared himself, and he was accustomed to sit at his desk from 6 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. with only an interval of half an hour for breakfast. Even then he only desisted from his labours with the half-jesting apology that a man could not work at his best for more than eleven hours at a stretch. He sometimes encountered in his subordinates an independence of character and originality of mind to which he did less than justice, and there is a substratum of truth in the gibe of his brilliant and impulsive lieutenant, Sir Bartle Frere, the Governor of Bombay, that Lawrence had imperfect sympathies with any one under him who did not belong to

the Punjab or to the county of Derry, or to Exeter Hall.[1] It is certain that some drastic reforms had to be made by his successor in the direction of economy and in the methods of working of many of the public departments. But if he somewhat disappointed expectations in one direction, he may be said to have exceeded them in another. Possibly his greatest success as Governor-General was won in that field of diplomacy and foreign policy where he might perhaps have been expected to fall short of the purview of a statesman.

His only annexation was effected after a short war with Bhutan, the wild forest-clad mountainous country on the steep southern slopes of the Himalayas, bounded on the north and east by Tibet, on the south by Eastern Bengal and Assam, and on the west by the British district of Darjeeling and the little native state of Sikkim, which is driven as a wedge between it and Nepal. British relations with the Bhutanese dated back to 1772 when, coming to the aid of the ruler of Cooch Behar, we drove them back from that principality. In 1783 we dispatched to Bhutan a commercial mission under Captain Turner which proved a failure. Our occupation of Assam in 1826 brought us into close relationship with Bhutan, and the people of that country were found to have raided and occupied the Duars or passes leading into Assam. Unsuccessful negotiations followed; at one time it was arranged that the Bhutanese should retain the passes and pay us tribute, while later on we acquired the Duars and gave them instead an annual subsidy; but the Bhutanese lived in a constant state of revolution and intestine strife with the result that their turbulent troops frequently raided the districts of Bengal and Assam at the base of their hills. The British protested against these forays but all attempts to come to a settlement failed. In the winter of 1863–4 the Bhutanese grossly

[1] *Life of Sir Bartle Frere*, by John Martineau, 1895, vol. i, p. 444.

insulted the Hon. Ashley Eden, an envoy sent by Lord Elgin, forcing him under compulsion to sign a humiliating treaty which surrendered to their control the Duars leading into Assam. The Indian government repudiated the treaty and demanded the release of all British subjects kidnapped during the preceding five years. No reply being received, the western Duars were annexed and the allowances hitherto paid for them were withheld. Our military leaders conducting frontier operations in a spirit of careless security were suddenly attacked in January 1865 and a British garrison was driven from Dewangiri with the loss of two guns. There was a vigorous outcry against this insult to British arms, but General Tombs quickly retrieved the position and peace was made in November. By its terms the Bhutanese surrendered eighteen Duars in return for a yearly subsidy. Lawrence was fiercely attacked by a party in India for granting such favourable conditions, but generosity to a vanquished enemy on the part of an imperial power, provided that generosity is not abused, is not only magnanimous but sound policy. In this case the lasting tranquillity that followed amply justified the Governor-General's moderation. The subsidy is so highly prized by the Bhutanese that our relations with them since that date have remained peaceful and cordial. Further, the territory surrendered by them (a strip 180 miles long and twenty to thirty broad) has proved a valuable acquisition and is now dotted with productive tea-gardens.

Sir John Lawrence had always been famous for supporting the cause of the Indian peasantry as opposed to his brother Henry, whose sympathies were rather with the aristocracy. It was therefore peculiarly fitting that the Punjab and Oudh Tenancy Acts of 1868 should fall within the period of his Governor-Generalship. In his advocacy of these measures he championed the cause of the ryot against a formidable coalition of the Indian landowners, the European planters,

the journalists, the Secretary of State, and a majority of his own Council. The Punjab Act recognized occupancy rights in the case of all tenants who had held their land for a certain time, and the measure became, as a subsequent Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal declared, 'the bulwark and charter of a contented peasantry'. On the annexation of Oudh by Lord Dalhousie, the landed proprietors or Talukdars had been at first, as we have seen, rather harshly treated. Subsequently Lord Canning's proclamation, though it nominally threatened a wholesale confiscation, had promised a favourable consideration to all those who promptly submitted; this clause had been interpreted so generously that it is said about two-thirds of the rebels received back their estates under stronger titles than before the annexation. The aim of the British authorities probably was to raise up, or rather to revive, a great territorial aristocracy who would consider their interests closely bound up with the stability of the new settlement. But undoubtedly indulgence to the Talukdars had gone too far, and the Oudh Tenancy Act of 1868 attempted to rectify this defect. It enacted that about one-fifth of the total number of ryots should be granted occupancy rights in the soil at fair rents, that cultivators whose rents were raised should be compensated for unexhausted improvements, and that the rent itself should only be increased after application to a court of law and equity. There was a loud outcry against this agrarian policy, and the Act dealing with Oudh was only passed in the teeth of strong opposition based on the allegation that faith had not been kept with the landowners, but Lawrence was supported by the weighty authority of Henry Maine, John and Richard Strachey in India and John Stuart Mill at home. John Strachey gave it as his deliberate view that 'whatever was accomplished was entirely due to the resolution of Lord Lawrence', and he considered that more might well have been done.

Sir John Lawrence had thus extended to the cultivators of Oudh and the Punjab the protection which Canning had given to the ryots of Bengal. 'No more useful or beneficent legislation', says a distinguished Indian economist and historian, 'was ever undertaken by the British Government in India . . . legislation which respected the great and protected the weak, and which was based on the unwritten customs and ancient rights of India.'[1]

Two severe famines visited India during Lawrence's period of office. The first in 1866 was most severe in Orissa, a division of Bengal extending south-west of Calcutta to the northern boundary line of the province of Madras. Though it occupied geographically an apparently favourable central position between two great presidencies of British India, it was in reality isolated to an extraordinary degree owing to its physical features and lack of natural means of communication. On the landward side it was separated from northern and central India by the almost impassable tangle of hills and jungle in which the plateau of Chota Nagpur ends; its seaboard, very badly provided with harbours, was almost unapproachable by ordinary craft for the greater part of the year. The river Mahanadi, in spite of its broad stream and imposing volume of waters, is practically useless for navigation and only potent for destruction through its violent inundations and shifting channels. Most of the roads at that time were impossible for wheeled traffic and only traversable by pack mules; the people as a whole were poor, indolent, backward, and feckless. In such a country the ravages of famine were particularly difficult to deal with. 'The inhabitants' said the Famine Commission Report, 'shut up between pathless jungles and an impracticable sea' were 'in the position of passengers in a ship without provisions'. From one to two millions are said to have perished, and the

[1] R. C. Dutt, *India in the Victorian Age*, 1904, p. 271.

government was undoubtedly caught unprepared. The fault lies chiefly at the door of Sir Cecil Beadon, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and his Council, who gave the most positive assurances that there was no real danger of scarcity. But Lawrence himself acknowledged, 'I might, and perhaps ought to have overruled them and insisted on prompt action; and I blame myself for not doing so'. The famine was followed by devastating floods, which inflicted terrible misery and privations upon the inhabitants of the low-lying lands of Orissa; 'that which the drought spared', wrote Lawrence, 'the floods drowned'. In the second famine in 1868–9, which affected Bundelkhand and Rajputana, remedial measures were taken earlier, and the principle was definitely laid down for the first time that the officers of the government were bound to take every available means to prevent deaths by starvation. The years 1862–6 were notable for Richard Temple's administration of the Central Provinces and the land settlement he carried out there for a term of thirty years.

The finances of India under Sir John Lawrence were in an unfavourable condition, but he had many difficulties with which to contend. In 1866 a great commercial crisis was brought about by special circumstances. The American civil war had caused an almost total cessation of the export of raw cotton owing to the blockade of the Southern ports by the fleet of the Northern states. As a result, the demand of Lancashire for the raw material required by her looms turned to India; so that the production of the Indian cotton districts in Berar, Nagpur, and the southern Maratha country was immensely stimulated. Fortunes were rapidly made. The value of land rose, and, as a settlement at that time happened to be in progress, the government in many districts increased the assessment. There was a glut of capitalseeking investment, an era of inflation, of reckless speculation—and then the inevitable crash. The sudden

prosperity proved a mushroom growth. The end of the American war opened the Southern ports once more and poured a great mass of long-staple cotton into the English markets; the artificial demand for the inferior short-staple cotton of India quickly ceased. Many great commercial houses, among them the famous firm of Overend and Gurney, were ruined, and the Banks of Agra and Bombay, the latter of which was under the supervision of government, suspended payment. Besides the stringency caused by this celebrated panic, the financial position was weakened by lavish state outlay. It is true that Lawrence, at the beginning of his period of office, was accused of niggardliness in cutting down the expenditure of Government House, but he found it difficult to resist the importunity of some of the ablest of his subordinates, Napier, Frere, and Rose, who were continually clamouring for money to be spent in the public service. Large sums, therefore, were disbursed on public works, irrigation schemes, and modern barracks for European troops—the last being a project in which Lawrence took a special and personal interest. In this he was not unmindful of the words addressed to him by Florence Nightingale when she heard he was to be Viceroy of India: 'In the midst of your pressure, pray think of us and of our sanitary things on which such millions of lives and health depend'.[1] Thus the normal annual expenditure rose from forty-five and three-quarters to fifty-four and a half millions. Lawrence also introduced into Indian finance the principle of raising money for reproductive works by loan instead of paying for them out of the ordinary revenue, and though that policy may be unobjectionable, if carefully controlled, his successors were afterwards called upon to insist on a severer definition of the term 'reproductive'. The general financial

[1] *Life of Lord Lawrence*, by R. Boswell Smith, 1885, vol. ii, p. 278.

result of his five years of office was a net deficit of two and a half millions.

We have now to deal with the most important question of Indian foreign policy, the problem of Afghanistan. The annexation of the Punjab had extended the British frontier up to the base of the Afghan mountains, but the boundary line was very variable and ill defined. From Baluchistan in the south to Chitral in the north there was, and to some extent still is, a zone of territory occupied by independent Pathan tribes, through which run the passes that debouch on to the plains of the Punjab. Down to the year 1893 these tribes nominally owned the sovereignty of the Amir of Afghanistan, though in reality they were almost completely out of his control. They were fierce, turbulent, and treacherous, always ready for plundering expeditions and raids over the frontier, and a constant source of embarrassment to the government of the Punjab. Punitive expeditions had been sent to chastise the tribesmen for violating the integrity of the British frontier, and owing to the good fighting qualities of the enemy and the mountainous nature of their country, large forces had to be employed. In 1863, as we have seen, an army of 6,000 was employed against the Wahabis, and in 1868 a force of 12,000 had to be dispatched to read the Pathans of the Black Mountains a lesson.

The conditions of the border therefore were obviously not entirely satisfactory, and it is not surprising that different schools of frontier defence were formed from time to time. The most extreme in one direction, though practically of little account, advocated a retirement to the line of the Indus. The supporters of the opposing view, who were somewhat loosely known as the 'Forward School', favoured the subjugation of the tribal zone and a scientific frontier conterminous with the Afghan boundary line. The more extreme members of this party did not shrink from

advocating the partition of Afghanistan, should a favourable opportunity be offered, or even its complete conquest. Practically, of course, they had to be content with far less than this, and their policy was not altogether unfairly described at the time as 'locating expensive bodies of troops in dangerous localities beyond our frontier for the purpose of guarding against an enemy who is still separated from us by sixty-six miles of desert and mountain'. Lawrence's policy was to leave the tribes their independence and endeavour to win their esteem; in relation to Afghanistan he advocated 'friendship towards the actual rulers combined with rigid abstention from interference in domestic feuds'. There can be little doubt that on the whole his policy was wise and provident. It acted well, with such slight modifications as the course of events required, till 1878. Lord Lytton's reversal of it proved disastrous in every way, and after 1881 we practically returned to it till 1919, for although we guaranteed the inviolability of Afghanistan as a buffer state, we scrupulously abstained from all interference in Afghan internal affairs.

To consider Lawrence's policy a little more in detail. Dost Muhammad the strong and able ruler, whose career, so far as it brought him into relation with British India, has been already related, died in 1863. A fierce struggle for the right to succeed him at once broke out between the most prominent of his sixteen sons. Sher Ali, the favourite of Dost Muhammad himself, maintained his position on the throne for about three years with great difficulty, and was then driven by his half-brother Afzal successively from Kabul in 1866 and from Kandahar in 1867 to take refuge in Herat his last stronghold. Afzal, however, died in October 1867, and his eldest son Abdur Rahman waiving his claims, he was succeeded by another brother Azim. In April 1868 Yakub Khan, Sher Ali's son, recaptured Kandahar, and Sher Ali himself, occupying Kabul in September, thus

regained all the possessions of his late father. Abdur Rahman and Azim were defeated in January 1869; Azim fled for refuge to Persia, where he soon afterwards died; Abdur Rahman, reserved for a higher destiny, escaped to Tashkend, and lived for ten years in that country a pensionary on Russian bounty.

Sher Ali, having re-established himself, proved his title by the only credentials that Afghans recognize, a stern and effective rule. The civil war with its extraordinary vicissitudes had rendered the position of the Indian government extremely difficult. Lawrence moved by a wise instinct—how wise only after-events could show—was determined at all hazards not to embroil himself in the dynastic wars of Afghan princes. This course he adopted not only from prudential motives and his own reasoned conviction, but also from gratitude to the memory of Dost Muhammad, who in spite of many temptations had loyally refrained from embarrassing us in the Mutiny, and had once in conversation with Lawrence himself expressed an earnest wish that after his death his sons should be allowed to fight out the succession question for themselves. Lawrence's policy therefore was only to recognize the *de facto* ruler and has been described as 'assenting peaceably to the visible facts resultant from a neighbour's settlement of his own affairs after his own fashion';[1] but it was certainly disconcerting that the various candidates for the throne underwent such kaleidoscopic changes of fortune. In 1864 Lawrence recognized Sher Ali as Amir of Afghanistan. In 1866 Sher Ali was driven from Kabul and Afzal was recognized as ruler of that city, Sher Ali as lord of Kandahar and Herat. Soon afterwards Afzal captured Kandahar and the Indian government acknowledged the *fait accompli* and only gave its recognition to Sher Ali as master of Herat. Critics of the

[1] *Essays on the External Policy of India*, by J. W. S. Wyllie, ed. by (Sir) W. W. Hunter, London, 1875, p. 119.

policy of *laisser faire* could say with some truth that such action was a direct encouragement to successful rebellion, that British approval of an Afghan chieftain's claims swung automatically with the gale of superior force like the vane of a weather-cock, and that no ruler of Afghanistan could set much store by a recognition which was transferred so lightly from one rival to another.

Meanwhile Russia spreading southwards from central Asia was tending to converge on the northern frontiers of Afghanistan, though her outposts were as yet far distant. About 1864 her forces moving westward from Vernoe and eastward from Perovsk brought her into contact with Khokand, Bokhara, and Khiva, the three great Muhammadan khanates between the Caspian Sea and western China. The absorption of these weak and disorderly states into the then colossal fabric of the Russian Empire was obviously a mere matter of time, but the movement only became marked towards the end of Lawrence's period of office. Tashkend, a city of over 70,000 inhabitants, was annexed in 1865; General Kaufmann was appointed Governor-General of Turkestan in 1867; Samarkand, part of Bokhara, fell in 1868.

Upon this event Sir John Lawrence urged the home government to come to some definite agreement with Russia as to a line of demarcation between the spheres of influence of the two empires. If only that were done, he professed little fear from Russian expansion, to which he felt that Great Britain had, least of all nations, any right to object; rather she might frankly welcome Russia's civilizing influence on the central Asian peoples. Nor did he stand alone in this opinion; Sir Herbert Edwardes the great frontier official wrote, 'Can any one say that to substitute Russian rule for the anarchy of Khiva, the dark tyranny of Bokhara and the nomad barbarism of Khokand would be anything but a gain to mankind?' Indeed no open objection was ever made

by Great Britain to the subjugation of these three khanates, though envoys from their rulers appealed to the Indian government for assistance.

As soon as Sher Ali in 1868 had firmly established his power, Lawrence made him a present of arms and £60,000 in money, but he frowned on any suggestion that he should commit himself further. Sir Henry Rawlinson, when member of the Secretary of State's Council, penned a famous minute dated July 20, 1868, in which he advised a more 'forward' policy, though one that was still moderate compared with later developments. He advocated the occupation of Quetta in northern Baluchistan commanding the Bolan Pass—a suggestion first put forward by General John Jacob in 1856—a close alliance with the Amir of Afghanistan, and the grant to him of an annual subsidy. To these suggestions Lawrence was altogether opposed, and he was supported by the ablest of his advisers in India, Maine, Temple, and Strachey. Apart from the fact that there was a direct conflict of military opinion as to whether the Bolan Pass could best be defended from the western or eastern end, Lawrence was convinced that any interference in Afghan affairs would lead to a rupture, and he had no belief in the policy of attempting to check Russia on the Oxus by quarrelling with Sher Ali. He declared it would be impolitic and unwise to lessen the difficulties of Russia, if she seriously thought of invading India, by meeting her half-way in a country notoriously unsuited to military operations and in the midst of a hostile or exasperated population. He believed our real security to lie in abstinence from entanglements in Afghanistan, in a compact and highly disciplined army stationed on our own border, in a careful management of our finances, and 'in the sense of security of title and possession which is gradually imbuing the principal chiefs and the native aristocracy'. Elsewhere he said truly enough that the first invaders of Afghanistan, whether British

or Russian, would be received as foes, while the next would be hailed as friends and deliverers. It should be obvious from all this that Lawrence was very unfairly charged with neglecting the Russo-Afghan problem. His 'inactivity', whether 'masterly' or not, was reasoned and deliberate. Few now doubt that he was right. He 'lulled the wakeful Anglophobia of Russian Generals and disarmed their inconvenient propensity to meet supposed plots of ours in Afghanistan by counter-plots of their own in the same country'.[1] His policy, with such modifications as changing circumstances required, was accepted by Lord Mayo, Lord Northbrook, and five successive Secretaries of State. All the misfortunes and disasters which Lawrence prophesied were fulfilled almost to the letter, when Lord Salisbury and Lord Lytton in an evil hour for their reputations decided to reverse it.

[1] *Essays on the External Policy of India*, by J. W. S. Wyllie, ed. by (Sir) W. W. Hunter, p. 119.

CHAPTER III

LORD MAYO. RELATIONS WITH SHER ALI. FINANCIAL REFORM

SIR JOHN LAWRENCE retired in January 1869, and on his return to England was raised to the peerage by the title of Lord Lawrence of the Punjab and Grately. Disraeli appointed to succeed him the Earl of Mayo, who had three times held the office of Chief Secretary for Ireland in Conservative ministries. Mayo's abilities, though appreciated by the Prime Minister, a shrewd judge of character, were as yet unrecognized by the people, and the nomination was received with marked disfavour. The fall of the government before the Governor-Generalship was actually vacant afforded Gladstone, the new Liberal Premier, a valid technical plea for cancelling the appointment, and he was loudly urged to avail himself of it. But he declined to do so, and Lord Mayo soon justified both Disraeli's original choice and Gladstone's magnanimity in not interfering with it.

It had been arranged that Lord Lawrence before his departure should meet Sher Ali in conference, but the Amir was long detained by troubles in his unruly dominions and the late Governor-General had sailed from India before Sher Ali could leave Afghanistan. When at last the Afghan ruler came to Ambala in March 1869 he met there not the wearied veteran Lawrence but his young, vigorous, and buoyant successor. There was, however, no breach of continuity in policy, because the new Viceroy in regard to Afghan affairs unreservedly adopted his predecessor's

standpoint. At the meeting Sher Ali showed himself eager to enter into much closer relations with the Indian government. He asked for a definite treaty, a fixed annual subsidy, assistance in arms and men whenever he should think needful to solicit it, an obligation on the part of the British to support his throne and dynasty, and the recognition of his favourite younger son, Abdulla Jan, as heir to the throne, instead of Yakub Khan, the elder son, who had helped so much in the past to restore him to the throne, but had since incurred his bitter enmity. These terms, however, went far beyond anything that Lord Mayo or the home government was prepared to concede. It is clear that they would dangerously have linked up British power and prestige in India with the fortunes of a notoriously unstable Oriental dynasty. Upon Lord Mayo was laid a difficult and delicate task. He was practically required to refuse all these proposals and yet retain, if possible, the friendship of Sher Ali. He succeeded mainly because of his diplomatic management of the interview, personal charm, and warm, hospitable, Irish manner, which quite won the heart of the Afghan chief.

While Lord Mayo told Sher Ali that under no circumstances would a British soldier cross his frontier to assist him in coercing rebellious subjects, and that no treaty binding us to give him or his dynasty unconditional support could even be considered, he gave him a written promise of moral support to be followed by gifts of money, arms, and ammunition whenever the British government deemed it desirable. Sher Ali was also informed that we should 'view with severe displeasure' any attempt to oust him from his throne. Exactly how much satisfaction he was expected to derive from this statement is perhaps not clear, but the important thing was that he was sent away on the whole contented, charmed with the geniality of the Viceroy, for whom he contracted a romantic friendship, and obviously

much impressed by the pomp and pageantry of the Durbar and the military resources of the British power. On his return to his own country he made some earnest, though occasionally misguided, attempts to carry out certain reforms suggested to him by Lord Mayo, and his admiring emulation of all things British ranged from the appointment of a council of state of thirteen members to an order to the shoemakers of Kábul to make henceforward only English boots.

The Lawrence policy of non-interference in Afghanistan required in the view of its author to be supplemented by a clear understanding with Russia, and considerable injustice is done when this complementary aspect of it is left out of account. Lawrence indeed had not shrunk from declaring his opinion that a border line should be definitely fixed, and that an advance of Russia towards India beyond that line should entail upon her 'war in all parts of the world with England'. Some tentative efforts were now made to reach such an understanding. Lord Mayo was indeed no Russophobe; he thought that Russia was not sufficiently aware of our power; 'that we are established compact and strong whilst she is exactly the reverse'. Negotiations were entered into between the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Clarendon, and Prince Gortschakoff in Europe, and Douglas Forsyth was sent on a mission from Calcutta to St. Petersburg in 1869 to lay before the Russian authorities the views of the government of India. The result was that Russia agreed to acknowledge Sher Ali's sway south of the Oxus over his father's former possessions, provided that he respected the integrity of Bokhara north of that river. The northern frontier of Afghanistan in detail had still to be fixed, and this took some considerable time. The Russians in 1871 claimed that Badakshan formed no part of Afghanistan proper, but after negotiations they accepted the British line in 1873.

The understanding with Russia as to the integrity of Afghanistan was a most important step forward in central Asian politics, and, had it not been for later European complications, a difficult and dangerous question might have been finally settled. From about 1870 General Kaufmann, Governor of Russian Turkestan, began a correspondence with the Amir, and though his letters were mainly complimentary and harmless enough, many have thought that Great Britain might well have asked that they should be discontinued. The Indian government would have had good reason for doing so, since Russia had given a pledge that she would regard Afghanistan as outside her sphere of influence, and Sher Ali himself was only embarrassed by these communications which he invariably sent on to the Governor-General. Lord Mayo, however, instead of requesting the Russian officials to communicate with the ruler of Afghanistan only through the British government, assured the Amir that Kaufmann's letters were mere matters of courtesy, and deprecated his uneasiness.

In internal matters Lord Mayo was called upon to undertake the unpopular and thankless task of the financial reformer. The deficit left by his predecessor had to be met, and supported by Sir Richard Temple and the Strachey brothers he set himself resolutely to bring about an equilibrium in the finances. Drastic measures were taken. It was reluctantly decided to increase the salt duties in provinces where they had hitherto been lightly imposed; and the income tax was raised from one to two and a half and then to three per cent.—an expedient which was extremely unpopular even among economists, for at this time it was contrary to fiscal orthodoxy to employ direct taxation as a normal means of raising revenue. In this particular case the levy of the tax was said to have been harsh and unjust and the expense of collection unduly great. It was discovered that the great spending departments, through want

of proper control, had been lavishing money unwisely and unprofitably, and annual reductions of expenditure amounting to over a million were forced upon them. These measures, which were avowedly designed to meet the temporary crisis, were followed by a permanent reorganization of the finances. The system hitherto in vogue had been that grants were made each year by the Governor-General in Council to the treasuries of the provincial governments. All monies were definitely ear-marked for special purposes and could be used for no other. If the authorities at Madras or Bombay saved money through increased efficiency in administration, they derived no benefit from their laudable economy, for they were expected to return the balance they had saved to the imperial treasury. Thus extreme centralization discouraged thrift and stereotyped administrative defects, for the provincial governments naturally put their demands as high as possible and spent all the money they could prevail upon the supreme government to allow them. In December 1870 an important reform was carried through, largely by the efforts and initiative of Richard and John Strachey. A fixed yearly grant which could be revised every five years was made to the various provincial governments, but within certain carefully defined limits the latter were given a free hand in allocating and spending their respective quotas.[1] Thus money saved in one department could be

[1] Some of the critics of British rule in India regard this reform of Lord Mayo's with disfavour on the ground that it caused an increase in the general burden of taxation. Each province, to augment its own revenues, now imposed new cesses mostly on land. Thus the state demand on the soil was increased; this, it was said, infringed in spirit the permanent settlement in Bengal, and in regard to other provinces broke the rule adopted in 1855 and 1864 of limiting assessment to one-half the rental. See R. C. Dutt's *India in the Victorian Age*, p. 257. But it may be pointed out that this practice of separating imperial from local taxation is almost universal in modern states, and the complaint that the total burden of taxation is thereby greatly increased, while at the same time the enhancement is disguised, has been raised in many countries besides India.

more profitably spent in another. The result of these reforms (afterwards considerably extended) was that the deficit of Lord Lawrence's rule was converted into a surplus for each of the four ensuing years, amounting in all to nearly six millions, while through better management, economy, and a stricter control the amount of revenue which had to be raised by taxation was actually reduced. One of Lord Mayo's financial ministers thus sums up his work, 'he found serious deficit and left substantial surplus. He found estimates habitually untrustworthy, he left them thoroughly worthy of confidence. He found accounts in arrears and statistics incomplete, he left them punctual and full.'

It was under Lord Mayo that the first general census of India was taken. He organized a statistical survey of the country and created a department of agriculture and commerce. In February 1872, after inspecting the convict settlements in the Andaman Islands, he was walking back to the landing-stage of Port Blair, where his steam yacht was moored, when a Pathan fanatic who had been following him in the twilight as he strode on a little ahead of his staff, leapt upon his back before the horrified escort could do anything and stabbed him to death. This wild and senseless crime put an end to a career which had signally refuted the ungenerous criticisms made on Lord Mayo's appointment. His Governor-Generalship had lasted but three years; the time was too short, and the problems with which he had to deal were hardly serious enough to test his capacity to the full, but there was every reason to believe that his statesmanship would have been equal to demands far higher than were actually made upon it. Succeeding as he did to a somewhat weary and war-worn veteran, he impressed all his subordinates by his immense energy and untiring powers of work. He was not content with the portfolio of the foreign department which a Governor-

General invariably retains in his own hands but added to it the onerous duties of the public works office. 'Enthusiasm', says Sir Richard Temple, 'pervaded his whole existence and was his distinguishing mark.' His winning manner and universal popularity were more than engaging personal attributes, they became imperial assets of great value. They won for him the real regard and willing co-operation of the protected chiefs, and enabled the complicated mechanism of Indian bureaucracy during his Viceroyalty to work with a minimum of friction and a maximum of efficiency.

CHAPTER IV

LORD NORTHBROOK. AFGHAN AFFAIRS

WHEN the sudden and terrible blow of Lord Mayo's assassination fell upon India, arrangements were promptly and quietly made to carry on the government. Until a successor to the murdered Viceroy should be appointed in England, Lord Napier of Merchistoun was sent for from Madras to act as Governor-General, and in the short time that elapsed before his arrival in Calcutta, Sir John Strachey held the reins of office. Gladstone selected as the new Viceroy, his Under-Secretary for War, Lord Northbrook, the head of the Baring family, whose character formed a curious contrast to the impulsive energy of his predecessor and the restless brilliance of his successor. He was a cautious and sound administrator who knew his own mind and possessed considerable independence of judgement. He was neither an eloquent speaker nor a fluent writer, and he practised a severe economy in that engrossing occupation of Indian rulers, the composition of elaborate minutes and state papers. A man of high character and kindly instincts, he was outwardly undemonstrative and in appearance rather unsympathetic. His policy deserves far more than that of Sir John Lawrence to be called a 'masterly inactivity'. 'My aim has been', he wrote in 1873, 'to take off taxes and stop unnecessary legislation',[1] and again eleven years later, 'the main object of my policy was to let things go quietly on—to give the land rest'.[2] He seems to have

[1] *Thomas George, Earl of Northbrook, a Memoir*, by Bernard Mallet, 1908, p. 69.
[2] *Idem*, p. 122.

held the view that the reforming energy of the Indian government since the Mutiny had rather outstripped the necessities of the case. One of his early acts, a very strong measure for a Governor-General recently arrived, was to veto a Bill which Sir George Campbell, the able Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, had passed through the legislature of his province for the setting up of rural municipalities. In the domain of finance Lord Northbrook showed, on the testimony of Sir Richard Temple—a high authority—'an admirable mastery of finance, economic facts and statistics such as I have never seen surpassed in India, not even by such economists and financiers as Wilson or Laing'.[1] Except for one year of famine, 1873-4, India in his time was passing through a period of material prosperity due partly to the effects of Lord Mayo's fiscal reforms, partly to the stimulus to oversea trade given by the increased amount of shipping using the Suez Canal, which had been opened in 1869. At home in the decade after 1860 the establishment of the Free Trade principle was completed by the gradual removal of all those remaining import duties which might have a protective effect, and in India the favourable state of the finances enabled Northbrook to make great advances towards the same ideal in India. The Indian tariff down to 1860 contained ten per cent. *ad valorem* duties on all imports, and three per cent. on the majority of exports. The import dues had been already reduced to 7½ per cent. under Sir John Lawrence in 1864, and Lord Northbrook in 1875 lowered the rate to 5 per cent. At the same time he abolished all export duties except those on oil, rice, indigo, and lac. The remission of the duty on wheat with the completion of the Indus valley railway was especially beneficial and made India a great wheat-exporting country. The home government naturally, in view of the economic theories prevalent at the time, pressed upon him a still wider

[1] Sir R. Temple, *Men and Events of my Time in India*, p. 396.

application of the Free Trade policy, but though Lord Northbrook was a convinced Free Trader, he was no *doctrinaire*, and he always maintained that the retention of a low general tariff upon imports for revenue purposes, though it might unavoidably involve slight protective effects, was necessary in the special conditions which prevailed in India. Accordingly, though he was willing to work 'on the lines of Gladstone', he admitted that it was 'at a very considerable distance'.[1] Towards the end of his period of office still stronger pressure was put upon him by the Conservative government of Disraeli to abolish even the five per cent. duty on Manchester cotton goods, but he sturdily refused to do so, on the ground that the Indian exchequer could not afford to surrender the revenue, and that it was politically unwise to give any plausible ground for the insinuation that the interests of Lancashire were to override those of India. In maintaining his point of view Lord Northbrook did not shrink from opposing the Conservative Secretary of State, Lord Salisbury, and protesting against the attempt of the home government to 'weaken the authority and hamper the action of the executive government of India'.[2] The chief point in which his financial operations lay open to criticism was his unconquerable dislike of the income tax. It had been reduced before Lord Mayo's death to one per cent. only, but even this was too high for Lord Northbrook, who removed it altogether. In selecting a remission of the income tax rather than a lowering of the salt duty, Northbrook was undoubtedly considering the interests of the European settler, the native trader and landowner, rather than that of the peasant, and he acted in opposition not only to the most expert Indian financiers, Sir Richard Temple and Sir John Strachey, but to the Duke of Argyll, Secretary of State for India, who wrote with some justice

[1] Mallet's *Northbrook*, p. 110.
[2] R. C. Dutt, *India in the Victorian Age*, p. 407.

and force, 'in the contest between a reform of the salt tax and the abolition of the income tax my feeling is that you have chosen to relieve the richer class, which is also the most powerful and the most clamorous'.[1] In all other respects he showed a determination to prevent if possible any undue pressure of taxation upon the Indian masses. 'The natives', he wrote in 1881, 'will be passively loyal to us—active loyalty we cannot expect—if we govern them justly and do not increase their taxes', and in 1881 he wrote to Lord Lytton 'I have always had my suspicions that the land revenue has been over assessed, and always treated with great suspicion the opinion of Sir John Strachey who was for screwing up the land revenue'.

In 1873–4 a famine was threatened in Bihar and part of Bengal in an area where the population was very dense. Lord Northbrook and Sir George Campbell being determined that the record of the Orissa famine of 1865 should not be repeated, large quantities of rice were purchased in Burma; the most elaborate means were taken regardless of cost to transport and distribute it, and relief works were everywhere established. The result was the very large expenditure of nearly six and a half millions on 'a famine of unusual brevity and of no exceptional severity'. But though some of the expenditure was regrettable, the government had erred on the right side, and Lord Northbrook's economy of the finances enabled the charges to be met out of revenue only.

The only other important event of Lord Northbrook's régime in India itself was the trial by commission of one of the most powerful of the ruling princes, Mulhar Rao, the Gaikwar of Baroda. There had been evidences of misgovernment in the state since 1870 when the Gaikwar succeeded. A commission of inquiry had reported in February 1874 that he had been guilty of ill-treating the

[1] Mallet's *Northbrook*, p. 67.

relations of his late brother, of the torture of women, and of the spoliation of merchants and bankers. He was given eighteen months to reform his administration, but the period of probation elapsed without any improvement making itself manifest; finally in 1875 he was put to trial on a charge of attempting to poison the British Resident, Colonel Phayre. The court consisted of two Indian princes, the Maharajas of Gwalior and Jaipur, the chief minister of the Nizam, Sir Dinkar Rao, and three British officers. The result was unfortunate, for while the English commissioners found him guilty, the Indian brought in verdicts of not guilty or not proven. Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of State, found his way out of a very delicate and difficult position by causing Lord Northbrook to proclaim the deposition of the Gaikwar, not on the finding of the commission, the particular charge there investigated being dropped, but on his gross misgovernment and notorious misconduct, of which the murder charge would have been in any case but the culminating point. In the whole business the government had not been very happily inspired; the abortive result of the trial might with a little imagination have been foreseen; as regards the deposition 'the right thing was done', says Lord Northbrook's biographer, 'but the manner of doing it was questionable'.[1] The deposed prince was promptly and secretly removed to Madras, and the threatened outbreak of popular feeling at Baroda was quieted by the immediate installation as Gaikwar of a child prince of the royal house, with Sir Madava Rao, a Maratha statesman, as chief minister. The British authorities thus clearly showed that there was to be no return to Dalhousie's annexation policy, while the prolonged minority of the new ruler enabled the administration of the country to be placed on a sound basis under the superintendence of British officers.

[1] Mallet's *Northbrook*, p. 97.

During the Viceroyalty of Lord Northbrook the central Asian problem was growing more acute owing to the steady advance of Russia towards the northern frontiers of Afghanistan. That advance was in great measure inevitable and was by no means so deliberate as it was thought to be at the time. Prince Gortschakoff pointed out in a famous minute in 1864 that his countrymen were drawn southwards in obedience to the same political law that had led the British armies northwards to the base of the Himalayas. All history teaches that a strong civilized power can hardly ever long maintain a stationary boundary line with loosely organized and semi-civilized peoples. The history of even a peaceful mercantile body like the East India Company, as we have seen, was one continual violation of the self-imposed canon that no new territories were to be acquired. Russia from time to time announced, as Great Britain had so often done in the past, that the limit of her pioneering activity was reached. These protests were generally uttered in good faith at the time, but as the weak central-Asian khanates disintegrated and dissolved into anarchy when they came into contact with her line of outposts, she was forced continually to push forward and occupy the positions they vacated, or see her own advanced frontier violated by plundering raids. But to many British statesmen and to Sher Ali on his uneasy throne the onward march of Russia seemed unscrupulous, premeditated, and fraught with sinister meaning. In 1869 the Russians established themselves at Krasnovodsk on the eastern coast of the Caspian. In June 1873 Khiva fell, and in the following month a conference was held between the Viceroy and an Afghan envoy at Simla. It did not do much to restore the Amir's waning confidence in the value of British support. Though he loyally acquiesced in it, he had been greatly disappointed in an award given by British arbitrators as to the frontier of the province of Seistan, in regard to which there had been a long-standing dispute

between himself and the Shah of Persia. At the conference the Afghan envoy declared that the rapid advances made by the Russians in central Asia had greatly alarmed the Afghans, and that the Amir, placing no confidence in Russian assurances of peaceful intentions towards Afghanistan, pleaded for a closer alliance with Great Britain. Northbrook saw the reasonableness of his request, and asked permission of the Secretary of State to assure Sher Ali that 'if he unreservedly accepts and acts upon our advice in all external relations, we will help him with money, arms and troops, if necessary, to repel an unprovoked invasion; we to be the judge of the necessity'; but he was not given authority from the Cabinet to commit himself to more than a reiteration of Lord Mayo's rather vague promise of support in a letter to the Amir dated September 6, 1873. The envoy asked that the British should regard the Russians as enemies, if they committed any aggression on Afghan territory, and Lord Northbrook had great difficulty in explaining to him that, since Great Britain was at peace with Russia, aggression on her part could not be specifically mentioned 'as it implied an admission of the probability of such a contingency arising'. Sher Ali accepted a present of 5,000 rifles, though he refused a proffered sum of ten lacs of rupees.

In spite of the many serious disadvantages of an offensive and defensive alliance with a semi-barbarous power like that of Afghanistan, whose action in the future could not be guessed or controlled, it is nevertheless a matter of regret that at this opportunity a more binding agreement was not entered upon with Sher Ali. In 1869 the Amir had not been long enough on the throne to warrant a confident belief that he could maintain his position, but by 1873 he had shown himself to be a capable and, judged by Afghan standards, an enlightened ruler. He seems to have seen clearly that he would have eventually to enter into closer relations with one or other of the two European peoples

whose armies were converging upon his isolated kingdom. He would gladly have kept both at arm's length, but of the two he deliberately and spontaneously gave the preference to Great Britain. A more binding agreement at this time, if the clauses of the treaty had been carefully drafted, would have implied, not a reversal of the Lawrence policy, but only a necessary modification of it to suit the altered circumstances of the case.

The Amir was disappointed and disheartened by the conference. Lord Northbrook was constitutionally unable to import into his manner the geniality which had won for his predecessor the strong personal regard of Sher Ali, and he soon afterwards gave the latter the most dire offence by addressing to him a dignified rebuke for treacherously arresting and imprisoning his eldest son Yakub Khan and proclaiming the younger, Abdulla Jan, as his heir. But though from this time onwards, probably to show his annoyance with the Viceroy, Sher Ali received with less reluctance the communications of Russian agents, there is no evidence to show that he regarded the approach of Russian troops to his frontiers with anything but feelings of the strongest aversion. By the exercise of ordinary care and tact he could probably have been induced to resume his old friendly attitude. Unfortunately in 1874 there was a change of government in England followed two years later by the arrival of a new Viceroy in India. If the Liberal Cabinet and Lord Northbrook to some extent erred in the direction of *laisser faire*, the Conservative ministry and Lord Lytton by their energetic interference fatally precipitated the development of the whole question at issue.

In March 1874 Disraeli became Prime Minister with the Marquis of Salisbury as Secretary of State for India. Both of these statesmen looked with apprehensive distrust upon Russian policy in Asia, and indeed they had some reason, as we have seen, to regard the existing state of our relations

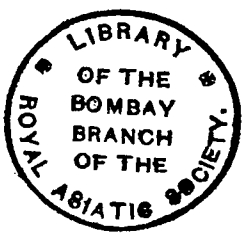
with Afghanistan as unsatisfactory. Had they insisted on a definite understanding from the foreign office at St. Petersburg that the integrity of the Amir's dominions should be guaranteed, and required Russian officers to desist from communications with Sher Ali, they would not only have been on strong ground but would incidentally have carried the Lawrence policy to its logical conclusion; for as recently as June 1873 Lord Northbrook's government had reaffirmed their adhesion to the principle of 'establishing a frank and clear understanding with Russia as to the relative position of British and Russian interests in Asia'. Unfortunately they chose to exert pressure at Kabul rather than at St. Petersburg. A minute of Sir Bartle Frere, member of the Secretary of State's council, had suggested that, in view of the critical position in Asia, it could no longer be considered a satisfactory arrangement that the only agent of the British government in Afghanistan should be an Indian Muhammadan. Lord Salisbury, adopting this opinion, suggested that Sher Ali should be asked to admit a British Resident within his country. Against this plan Lord Northbrook and the whole of his council earnestly protested. They pointed out that in 1869 and 1873 Sher Ali had expressed strong fears of Russian designs but had been told that his apprehensions had no basis of fact. His request for a defensive alliance had been firmly declined on the ground that such an alliance was unnecessary. He was now to learn that the British government had swung violently round to the view that the Russian peril was so serious as to require the presence of a British Resident in his country—a plan to which it was well known that he was irreconcilably opposed. 'I cannot agree', wrote Lord Northbrook to Lord Salisbury, 'with your suspicions about the Amir, they are not confirmed by anyone of authority here.' Unluckily the Secretary of State, in the words of Lord Cromer, 'was disposed to neglect, and, I also think, to underrate the value

'of the views of the Anglo-Indian officials'.[1] He merely repeated his suggestion, declaring that the government could not view with indifference the influence of Russian expansion 'upon the uncertain character of an Oriental chief whose ill-defined dominions are thus brought within a steadily narrowing circle between the conflicting pressures of two great military empires, one of which expostulates and remains passive whilst the other apologises and continues to move forward'. Lord Salisbury therefore still desired that a mission should be sent, and suggested that 'there would be many advantages in ostensibly directing it to some object of smaller political interest which it will not be difficult . . . to find or, if need be, to create'. The Viceroy, however, merely repeated his protest of dissent and soon afterwards resigned his office. The resignation was said to be due to private reasons, but however this may be, it is clear that Lord Northbrook could not have worked much longer with the Marquis of Salisbury. There had been already, as we have seen, serious friction between the two men on the tariff question, and the Viceroy was quite convinced of the unwisdom of the new Afghan policy which, as he pointed out, was a reversal of that 'advocated by Lord Canning . . . renewed by Lord Lawrence . . . ratified by Lord Mayo'. 'All the spirited foreign policy motions', he wrote in a private letter, 'come from Frere and Co. at home. Here we are very quiet and steady people.'[2] The difference between their points of view was fundamental. 'Lord Salisbury's brilliant and subtle intellect', says Mr. Mallet, 'his contempt for precedent, and a certain proneness in him to impulsive decisions presented a striking contrast to Lord Northbrook's caution and common sense, his reliance upon ascertained fact and experience, his power of steady and effective action.'[3]

[1] Mallet's *Northbrook*, p. 91.
[2] *Idem*, p. 99.
[3] *Idem*, p. 90.

With prophetic insight Lord Northbrook on the eve of his departure warned Lord Salisbury that to force Sher Ali to receive an agent against his will was likely 'to subject us to the risk of another unnecessary and costly war in Afghanistan before many years are over'.[1]

[1] Mallet's *Northbrook*, p. 105.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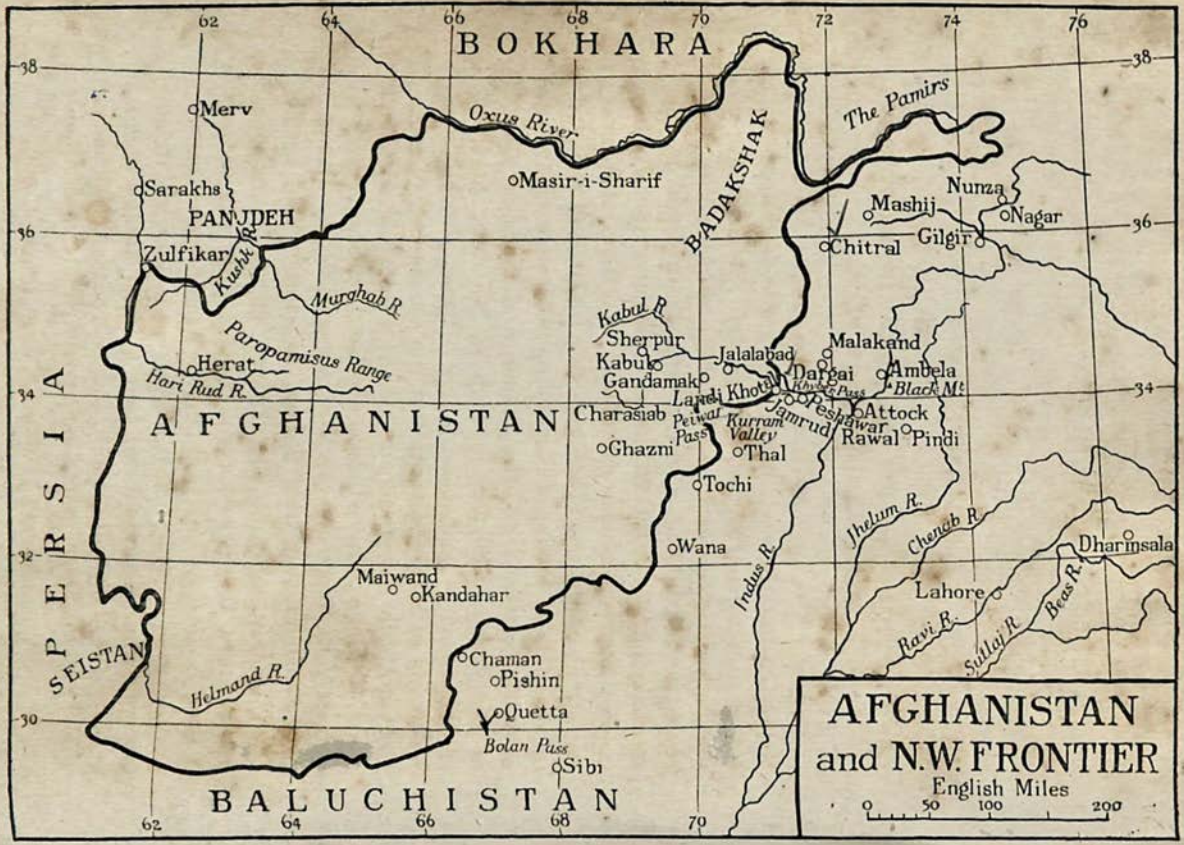
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CHAPTER V

LORD LYTTON'S POLICY IN AFGHANISTAN TO THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR

THE new Viceroy was Lord Lytton, son of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, the novelist. He was a man of great ability, a poet, essayist, and an eloquent speaker. As a member of the diplomatic service he had resided at many European courts, and exhibited in his general bearing and in his mental processes a certain unconventionality typical of the cosmopolitan traveller and the man of letters. 'He was born a Parisian', says his personal friend and political opponent, Lord Morley of Blackburn, 'with a pleasant touch of Bohemian added, and the Puritan and Philistine graces of Simla were repugnant to him.'[1] He came to India commissioned to inaugurate a new Afghan policy. The retirement of his predecessor and the vicissitudes of party government in England had thus by 1876 replaced Gladstone, the Duke of Argyll, and Lord Northbrook, as Premier, Secretary of State, and Viceroy respectively, by Disraeli, Lord Salisbury, and Lord Lytton, and there could hardly have been a more striking change in the personality of the men themselves or the ideas they represented. A strictly unaggressive attitude, non-interference carried perhaps to an extreme, and marked consideration for Afghan susceptibilities were replaced by a spirited foreign policy, imperialistic aims, and a subtle and provocative diplomacy. Under the guidance of the new governments in England

[1] Lord Morley's *Recollections*, vol. ii, p. 188.

and India we drifted within three years into the second Afghan war,[1] which to some extent in its inception, and still more in its course and conclusion, strangely recalled the disastrous campaigns of forty years before, proved, in contemporary opinion at any rate, the grave of Lord Lytton's reputation as a statesman, and, perhaps more than anything else, caused the downfall of the powerful Conservative ministry of 1874.

Lord Lytton, in his own words, brought out instructions for 'a more definite, equilateral and practical alliance' with Sher Ali, and he was empowered to offer the Amir most of the terms he had asked for in 1873, namely, a fixed and augmented subsidy, a recognition of his younger son, Abdulla Jan, as heir to the throne of Afghanistan, and a definite pledge 'by treaty or otherwise' of British support in case of foreign aggression. Unfortunately these terms were only to be granted if Sher Ali allowed a British Resident to be stationed at Herat. The stipulation was reasonable enough as a preliminary condition to a defensive alliance, but if Sher Ali chose to do without such an alliance we had no right to force a mission upon him or make his refusal to receive one a *casus belli*. Lord Lytton was given a very free hand in selecting the time and manner in which the new policy was to be carried out, and he was in fact mainly responsible for the calamitous series of events that followed. It is clear that Lord Salisbury, before he ceased to be Secretary of State, had begun to lag behind the eager promptings of the Viceroy, as was shown by his

[1] The main authorities used for this and the following chapter are first of all the Afghan Blue Books, from which most of the quotations are taken, viz. *Correspondence respecting the relations between the British government and that of Afghanistan since the accession of the Ameer Shere Ali Khan*, 1878; *Further Papers relating to the affairs of Afghanistan*, 1878, 1879, and 1881. Secondly, *The History of Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, by Lady Betty Balfour, 1899; *England, India, and Afghanistan*, by F. Noyce, 1902; *The Second Afghan War*, by H. B. Hanna (two vols.), 1899–1904.

famous remark in Parliament that excessive dread of Russia might be mitigated by the study of large-scale maps.

Sher Ali was first asked to receive a complimentary mission, which was formally to announce to him the assumption by the Queen of the title 'Empress of India'. This he politely declined on the ground that it was unnecessary. At the same time the British native agent at Kabul reported, undoubtedly with the Amir's knowledge and permission, that among other reasons for the refusal was the fact that Sher Ali could not guarantee to protect a British envoy from the fanaticism of his subjects, and further that, if he permitted him to enter the country, he could not refuse the same privilege to the Russians. This was undoubtedly true, and the right course for the Indian government, if they still desired the Afghan alliance, would have been to grant him the terms offered without the objectionable condition attached to them. Lord Lytton, however, maintained that the reply of the Amir was couched in terms of 'contemptuous disregard' of British interests, and he warned him that 'he was isolating Afghanistan from the alliance and support of the British government'. Three members of the Viceroy's council, Sir William Muir, Sir Henry Norman, and Sir Arthur Hobhouse dissented from this view. They held that Sher Ali was acting within his rights in declining to receive the mission, and that the government was not dealing fairly with him in laying stress upon its temporary and complimentary character, when it was patent to all that its real object was to establish a permanent embassy in his country. In October it was arranged that Lord Lytton should have an interview at Simla with the British Muhammadan agent from Kabul, who was afterwards to return and communicate to Sher Ali the results of their conversation. It cannot be said that the meeting did much to improve matters, and the striking and picturesque phrases of Lord Lytton were under the circumstances more forcible

than judicious. The agent was told that the position of Afghanistan between Russia and Great Britain resembled that 'of an earthen pipkin between two iron pots', that if Sher Ali remained our friend the military power of England 'could be spread around him as a ring of iron, and if he became our enemy, it could break him as a reed'.

At the end of 1876 a treaty was negotiated by Major (afterwards Sir) Robert Sandeman, the famous frontier officer, with the Khan of Kalat, which gave the British the right to occupy the long-coveted post of Quetta. The Khan claimed, but had lately proved unable to exercise, a general authority over the other chieftains of Baluchistan, the wide country bounded on the south by the Arabian Sea, on the west by Persia, on the east by Sind and the Punjab, and on the north by the dominions of Sher Ali. Quetta, a strategical position of great natural strength, with a climate peculiarly suited to Europeans, commanded the Bolan Pass, one of the gates of Afghanistan, and the Amir must naturally have looked upon the occupation of it as a preliminary step to a British advance upon Kandahar. He could hardly forget that Quetta was the base from which a British army had marched to the conquest of his country in the first Afghan war.

In January 1877 a conference was held at Peshawar between Sir Lewis Pelly and Seiad Nur Muhammad, the minister of Sher Ali, who had conducted the former negotiations with Lord Northbrook in 1873; the conference was without result, because the Afghan envoy steadily refused to concede the point that a British officer should reside in Afghanistan. Lord Lytton seems to have wilfully refused, or been quite unable, to understand that Sher Ali had the soundest reasons for his action. 'The British nation', said Seiad Nur Muhammad, 'is great and powerful, and the Afghan people cannot resist its power, but the people are self-willed and independent and prize their honour above

life.' No Amir, if he desires to retain his throne, can afford to let it be supposed for a moment that he is in any sense controlled by a foreign state.) The British Muhammadan agent at Kabul afterwards declared that the mere mistaken report that he was personally in favour of the coming of British officers to Kabul was as much as an order for his death. In our own time the able and powerful Amir, Abdur Rahman, though he had a genuine friendship and admiration for the British, to whom he owed his position, would never make the least concession on this point. The Afghans knew perfectly well that many of their administrative methods would not satisfy the tests of the British political officer. They dreaded the clear scrutiny of European eyes testing the semi-barbarous justice of the East by the humanitarian standards of the West. 'We mistrust you', said Seiad Nur Muhammad, 'and fear you will write all sorts of reports about us, which will some day be brought forward against us.' It is doubtful whether Sher Ali half understood the brilliantly phrased and closely reasoned letters and minutes that the indefatigable Viceroy launched at him. Lytton, indeed, with a strange lack of imagination for so imaginative a man, failed to make allowances for the necessary limitations of the Amir's knowledge or the doubts and suspicions that preyed on his mind. It was commonly reported in the bazaars at this time that Russia and England had agreed upon the partition of Afghanistan, and had sealed the unscrupulous compact by the marriage of the Duke of Edinburgh to a Russian princess. Lord Lytton's elaborate attempts in his dispatches to prove that, by sending an envoy at all, Sher Ali had given an 'anticipatory consent' to the admission of a Resident Officer, and that British relations with Afghanistan were still entirely governed by the treaty of 1855, Lord Mayo's famous letter and the assurances of Lord Northbrook having no binding force, gave a most

unfortunate impression of disingenuous dealing. It is likely enough that from this point Sher Ali entered into closer relations with the Russian agents, though it is also plain that, had it been in his power, he would have avoided entanglements with either of the great European states. In March Seiad Nur Muhammad died at Peshawar. Lord Lytton very precipitately seized the opportunity to declare the conference at an end, in spite of the fact that a successor to the dead envoy was said to be on his way from Kabul with fresh instructions from Sher Ali. Communications with the Afghan court were now entirely suspended, though Lord Lytton by a manifesto assured the Afghan people in words that were often afterwards with good reason quoted against him, 'that so long as they are not excited by their ruler or others to acts of aggression upon the territories or friends of the British government, no British soldier will ever be permitted to enter Afghanistan uninvited'. In May the Viceroy gave his version of the negotiations in a long and brilliantly written dispatch which was afterwards severely and justly censured as an ingenious piece of special pleading rather than a state paper.

Up to that time no irretrievable step had been taken. There was much force in Lord Lytton's contention that our relations with Afghanistan, in view of the situation in central Asia, were unsatisfactory. It was a matter for regret that Sher Ali could not accept our point of view. But he was an independent prince, and however inconvenient it might be for our interests, we had no moral right whatever to forbid him to have relations with Russia or to force upon him an envoy of our own, and yet this was the course to which Lord Lytton ultimately committed himself and the British government. The old Lawrence policy was in truth based upon a generous recognition of the rights of small and weak states, the school of Lytton and his followers relied upon a cynical doctrine of political

expediency. 'Chiefs like the Amir of Kabul and the Khan of Kalat', wrote Sir James Stephen, 'though not dependent upon us in the sense of any definite duties or allegiance to the Queen, must be dealt with on the understanding that they occupy a distinctly inferior position—their inferiority consisting mainly in this, that they are not to be permitted to follow a course of policy which exposes us to danger. . . . Relations . . . with these states are all determined by the fact that we are exceedingly powerful and highly civilised, and that they are comparatively weak and half barbarous.'

When the conference at Peshawar was over, Lytton turned his attention to the tribes of the north-west frontier, and plainly showed his eagerness to push his outposts nearer to Afghanistan through their territory. By a 'more or less confidential arrangement' with the Maharaja of Kashmir he established a British agency at Gilgit. Even his chosen instrument, Captain Cavagnari, warned him that such a policy would render a reconciliation with Sher Ali impossible, and Lord Lytton's daughter notes that he met with opposition from the old frontier officials 'who looked with suspicion upon any system of diplomacy which required secrecy and dexterity'. The truth is that the Viceroy's opponents regarded his policy as altogether too secret and dexterous, and would have preferred more of the straightforwardness which was formerly characteristic of Indian frontier policy. Lord Lytton indeed was now, on his own admission, working for the 'gradual disintegration and weakening of the Afghan power'.

But the ruin of Sher Ali, through the strange interplay of world forces, was finally brought about by disturbances in another continent. In 1876 the Serbians and Montenegrins rose in arms against the misgovernment of the Turk. In April of the following year, Russia, in sympathy with the insurgents, declared war upon Turkey, and in 1878 her armies crossed the Balkans. Disraeli, now Earl of Beacons-

field, holding that the interests of England demanded the integrity of the Ottoman empire, obtained from Parliament a grant of £6,000,000 for naval and military purposes, and ordered the Mediterranean squadron to pass the Dardanelles. The Russians were deterred by the British menace from attacking Constantinople, and in March 1878 concluded the treaty of San Stefano with the Sultan. But Russia's diplomatic success was neutralized by Great Britain. Lord Beaconsfield refused to recognize the treaty, called out the army reserves, occupied Cyprus with the permission of Turkey, and reinforced the Mediterranean squadron. War was only averted by the mediation of Germany. At a congress of the Powers at Berlin in June and July 1878 the treaty of San Stefano was modified in a manner unfavourable to Russia. The difference, however, between the terms of the treaties of San Stefano and Berlin proved of very doubtful advantage to Great Britain, and the Russian government was greatly irritated by Lord Beaconsfield's provocative and unfriendly attitude. During the height of the tension the Prime Minister had adopted the dramatic but useless course of bringing some Indian troops by the Suez Canal to Malta, and Russia naturally determined to afford the Indian government some outlet for its warlike energies nearer home.

On June 13, the opening day of the Berlin congress, General Stoletoff started from Tashkend for Kabul. The desperate attempts made by Sher Ali to stay his advance form in themselves a complete answer to Lytton's constantly repeated assertion that he was eagerly abetting Russian designs. Sher Ali appealed and protested; he repeated almost word for word to the Russian Governor-General of Turkestan the arguments which he had formerly used to the Viceroy of British India, and he offered, as he had done in the case of Lord Lytton, to send one of his own ministers to a conference at Tashkend. But his opposition was

beaten down by the reply that Stoletoff could not now be recalled, and that the Tsar would hold Sher Ali responsible if any harm happened to him. The Russian government was in a position to put pressure upon the Amir from the fact that his nephew Abdur Rahman had long been a pensioner on their bounty. A significant hint was conveyed to Sher Ali that a dangerous rival to his throne might be put forward, if he proved obstinate. Sher Ali reluctantly yielded, and after his downfall papers at Kabul were found which showed that he now entered into a definite treaty with the Russian government for perpetual and permanent friendship and alliance between the two countries. On the news of the arrival of the Russian mission in Kabul, Lytton, after cabling home for, and receiving, the permission of the home government, determined to insist that Sher Ali should in like manner receive a British envoy on the ground that the only alternative would be a 'continued policy of complete inaction, difficult to maintain and very injurious to our position in India'. Sher Ali was to be required to enter into no negotiations with other states without permission, to concede our right to send British officers to Kabul for a conference with him whenever we saw adequate occasion, and to allow a permanent British agent to reside at Herat.

This whole procedure was a calamitous mistake. It was plain that Russia and not Afghanistan was responsible for the entry of the mission into Kabul, and it was she, if any one, as Lord Lawrence argued, who ought to have been called to account. After the signature of the treaty of Berlin, the continued residence of Stoletoff in the Afghan capital could reasonably be regarded as an unfriendly act, and the British ambassador at St. Petersburg should have been instructed to demand his recall. There is no doubt that the request would have been promptly granted, for, even as it was, Stoletoff at once left Kabul when he heard that the British intended to send a mission. Russia's action

was solely designed as a counter-stroke to British policy in Europe, which had thwarted her in the hour of triumph. A golden bridge for a retreat from an untenable position was built by Stoletoff's retirement. The right course for the Viceroy was to assume that Sher Ali, as indeed he did, welcomed the Russians' withdrawal, and to attempt to win him back to friendship. Unfortunately Lord Lytton only looked upon the treaty of Berlin as having 'freed our hands and destroyed, at the same time, all hopes on his (Sher Ali's) part of complications to us, or active assistance to himself, from Russia'. A Muhammadan envoy was dispatched to Kabul on August 30 to announce the approach of the British mission. The Afridis of the Khyber Pass, who owed allegiance to the Amir, were bribed to allow the envoy and his escort to pass—an action to which Sher Ali had every right to object. The news of the death of Abdulla Jan, the Amir's favourite son, in August 1878, grief for whose loss is said for a time to have almost unhinged his reason, caused a little delay, but after a few days Sir Neville Chamberlain, the envoy selected by Lord Lytton, set out from Peshawar; an advance escort was met at Ali Masjid, a lonely post at the entrance of the pass, by an Afghan officer, who courteously but firmly intimated to the leader, Major Cavagnari, that he could not allow him to proceed without orders from Kabul. The British envoy having ascertained that the Afghans were prepared to use force, if he attempted to proceed, returned to Peshawar.

Lord Lytton declared that the mission had been 'forcibly repulsed'—a statement obviously at variance with the facts—and eagerly pressed the home government to sanction a declaration of war. But the Cabinet imposed a few weeks delay, and according to their requirements an ultimatum was sent on November 2 demanding from the Amir, if he wished to avoid the calamities of an invasion, a 'full and suitable apology' and his consent to a permanent British

mission in Afghanistan. Hostilities were to commence, unless an answer were received by November 20. A belated reply reached the Viceroy on November 30, dated November 19, which, though it announced Sher Ali's acceptance of the mission, was declared to be inadequate as containing no apology. By that time moreover the war had begun, for Lord Lytton had set his forces in motion the day after the ultimatum expired.

Once more therefore Great Britain was committed to a war with Afghanistan. But at home the opposition to the policy was widespread and powerful. In Parliament, Gladstone in one of the weightiest of his public utterances condemned the Lytton policy in words unimpeachably true as a summary of the past, and strikingly prophetic as a forecast of the future—'We made war in error upon Afghanistan in 1838. To err is human and pardonable. But we have erred a second time on the same ground and with no better justification. . . . This error has been repeated in the face of every warning conceivable and imaginable, and in the face of an unequalled mass of authorities. It is proverbially said that history repeats itself, and there has rarely been an occasion in which there has been a nearer approach to identity than in the case of the present and the former wars. . . . May heaven avert the omen! May heaven avert a repetition of the calamity which befell our army in 1841.'

CHAPTER VI

THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

On the declaration of war, November 21, the three great passes of Afghanistan were entered by British armies. Sir Samuel Browne threaded the Khyber, captured Ali Masjid and advanced to Jalalabad. Major-General (afterwards Lord) Roberts marched up the Kurram valley, and drove the enemy from the heights that command the Peiwar Pass, a position of great natural strength. The southernmost invading force under General Stewart marched from Quetta through the Bolan Pass upon Kandahar. There was little effective opposition. The whole Afghan people seemed sunk in sullen apathy. The wretched Sher Ali vainly endeavoured to get help from General Kaufmann, but that astute officer warned him, as a friend, to make his peace with the British, if they gave him the opportunity. In December the Amir fled into Russian Turkestan having first released his eldest son, Yakub Khan, from imprisonment and left him behind at Kabul to make the best terms he could with the invaders. Sher Ali renewed his appeals for assistance to Kaufmann, but the Russians only replied that to invade Afghanistan was at present beyond their power, and they gave him no encouragement when he expressed a desire to make his way to St. Petersburg and lay his wrongs before the Tsar. Nothing was done for him by Russia, though the Russian ambassador in London is said to have obtained a promise from the British government that the integrity of Afghanistan should be respected. On February 21 Sher Ali, worn out by physical disease and mental anxiety, died at Masar-i-Sharif. The story of his career is a rather mournful commentary on the consideration likely to be shown to a weak semi-barbarous eastern monarch

when, unhappily for him, his territories form a possible point of contact between two powerful and expanding western empires. His lonely death in bitterness and exile is not an incident upon which either Russia, who had led him on by false and delusive hopes, or England, who had at first repelled and then coerced him, can look back with any feelings of satisfaction. Sher Ali was a man of considerable ability, who had proved himself competent to weld his unruly dominions into a single political entity, but he beat in vain against the ruthless ambitions and selfish interests of his powerful neighbours. The Cabinet decided to recognize Yakub Khan as his successor, though Lord Lytton would have preferred the disintegration of Afghanistan. He declared that the rulers of the country would always tend to prefer the 'ambitious, energetic and not over-scrupulous' government of Russia to 'alliance with a power so essentially pacific and sensitively scrupulous as our own'—a description which, it is to be feared, Sher Ali might have failed to recognize as particularly applicable to the British policy of Lord Lytton's own time.

In May 1879 a treaty was made at Gandamak with the new Amir, by which he agreed to conduct his foreign relations with other states in accordance with the advice and wishes of the British government, to countenance a permanent British Resident at Kabul with agents at Herat and other places on the frontier, and to assign the Kurram Pass to British control together with Pishin and Sibi, districts in the neighbourhood of the Bolan Pass. The British engaged to support him, at their discretion, with money, arms, and men against any foreign aggression, and to pay him an annual subsidy of six lakhs of rupees. The British troops were to be withdrawn from Afghanistan, except those stationed at Kandahar, which was not to be evacuated till the autumn. The treaty of Gandamak marked the apogee of Lord Lytton's Afghan policy. He claimed that it fully

secured all the objects of the war, and Lord Beaconsfield added that, by it, we had attained 'a scientific and adequate frontier for our Indian empire'. But their triumph was short-lived. The Indian government had once more, by painful experience, to learn the lesson that directly any ruler of Afghanistan is supported by a foreign power he forfeits all the respect and allegiance of his fellow countrymen. How blind the Viceroy was to the real state of affairs may be seen from his statement that 'the Afghans will like and respect us all the more for the thrashing we have given Sher Ali'. A month after the time when these words were written the clouds were ominously gathering, and the fate of Burnes and Macnaghten was impending over Sir Louis Cavagnari, who, having entered Kabul as British Resident on July 24, was exhibiting in that position something of the same blindness to sinister signs of danger and the same fatal optimism as his predecessors.

On September 2 Cavagnari sent a telegram to the Viceroy containing the words 'All well'. The next day the mutinous and disorderly Afghan army rose, attacked the residency, and murdered the envoy with the whole of his escort. Yakub Khan was either powerless to intervene or in secret sympathy with the assassins; at any rate he made no useful effort to protect the embassy. The catastrophe was a terrible blow to the Viceroy. 'The web of policy', he wrote, 'so carefully and patiently woven, has been rudely shattered. . . . All that I was most anxious to avoid in the conduct of the late war and negotiations has now been brought about by the hand of fate.'[1] British forces were soon once again in motion. Sir Donald Stewart reoccupied Kandahar, General Roberts once more marched through the Kurram valley on Kabul, which he entered on October 12 after defeating the rebels at Charasiab, and inflicted

[1] *Personal and Literary Letters of . . . Earl of Lytton*, ed. by Lady Betty Balfour, vol. ii, p. 169 [1906].

severe punishment on those who were proved to have taken any part in the attack on the residency. Yakub Khan, dreading the reception he might meet with, had joined the British army before the entry into Kabul. He now abdicated his throne and threw himself upon British protection, declaring that he would rather be a grass-cutter in the English camp than ruler of Afghanistan. An inquiry was afterwards held into his conduct, and though he was acquitted of any complicity in the murder, he was pronounced to have been 'culpably indifferent' to the fate of the envoy, and was removed to India as a state prisoner. In any case it was felt to be impossible that he should ever be replaced upon the throne.

The Indian government had now to face a very difficult position. Afghanistan had practically relapsed into anarchy and there was no government left with which to negotiate. In the winter there was fierce fighting round Kabul, and it was only with great difficulty that Roberts kept his communications with India open. Indeed, for ten days, December 14 to 24, those communications were cut. He was forced to abandon Kabul and the Bala Hissar, the famous citadel, and retire to defences at Sherpur, where he was besieged by 100,000 tribesmen. In the spring of 1880 Stewart, marching from Kandahar, defeated the rebels at Ahmad Khel and joined Roberts at Kabul. It was plain that the British were only in effective occupation of the comparatively small portion of Afghanistan east of a line drawn between these two cities. To conquer the whole country would have involved ruinous expense, and was impossible unless the forces hitherto employed were largely increased; while to retire without leaving some constituted authority in the country would be fatal to British prestige. It was finally decided on Lord Lytton's advice that western Afghanistan should be permanently severed from the rest of the country; the province of Kandahar was detached

from Kabul and handed over to an independent chief, Sher Ali Khan, to whom the Indian government pledged itself to give military support in case of need. The difficulty still remained of dealing with Kabul and north-western Afghanistan, and it was finally solved in a very unexpected and, as it turned out, fortunate manner. 'We have found in Abdur Rahman', wrote Lord Lytton, 'a ram caught in the thicket'.[1] This man, the nephew of Sher Ali, son of that Afzal Khan who had reigned as Amir for seventeen months in 1866–7, suddenly appeared on the northern frontier. Since 1870 he had lived in banishment beyond the Oxus under Russian protection, and his patrons, with the obvious intention of embarrassing the British government, now furnished him with a small escort of armed men, and sent him to try his fortune in the land of his birth. Lord Lytton had already investigated, and reluctantly disallowed, the claims of many other candidates for the Afghan throne; he now took the exceedingly bold step of offering to give Abdur Rahman a free hand in north-western Afghanistan, and recognize him as Amir, if he proved acceptable to the people. This policy was described at the time as 'the greatest leap in the dark on record', and must indeed have seemed exceedingly hazardous, but it was fully justified by success. Abdur Rahman was one of the greatest Asiatics of his time, a man at once of penetrating shrewdness and of far-reaching vision. In his eleven years of brooding solitude as a pensionary upon Russian bounty, he had fathomed the political ideals and methods of his patrons, though he was always personally grateful to them for affording him an asylum in his exile. With remarkable insigh he recognized that Great Britain, in spite of her dubious record in the past towards his country, was likely to be the truer friend to Afghan independence. But from the first he had to walk with the utmost wariness, and there was thus

[1] *Personal and Literary Letters of . . . Earl of Lytton*, ed. by Lady Betty Balfour, vol. ii, p. 202.

considerable danger that the British would (as indeed some of them often did) misunderstand his attitude. 'I was unable', he says in his remarkable memoirs, 'to show my friendship publicly to the extent that was necessary: because my people were ignorant and fanatical. If I showed any inclination towards the English, my people would call me an infidel for joining hands with infidels. . . .'[1] He was bound therefore, even while accepting our proposals, to give his countrymen no ground for suspecting that his power rested on the support of British bayonets, to treat us coldly and churlishly and make it appear as though concessions were extorted from, rather than granted by, us. Considering the universal detestation felt for us at the time and long afterwards by the Afghan people, Abdur Rahman's success in raising himself to the throne by our connivance and gradually winning over his subjects to acquiesce in our alliance and protection is one of the most remarkable political feats in modern Asian history.

But before this plan could be carried out Lord Lytton had resigned his office. In April 1880 the Conservative government had suffered a severe defeat in the general election. Gladstone succeeded Lord Beaconsfield as Prime Minister, and Lord Hartington replaced Lord Cranbrook (Lord Salisbury's successor) as Secretary of State for India. In normal cases no Viceroy would be expected to resign owing to a change of ministry in England, but the foreign and Indian policy of the Conservative government had met with unsparing criticism and severe condemnation both in Parliament and in the country, and Lord Hartington himself had described the Viceroy as 'the incarnation and the embodiment of an Indian policy which is everything an Indian policy should not be'. Accordingly Lord Lytton laid down his office when the verdict of the nation, as given at the polls, was known to him. It will be convenient here

[1] *The Life of Abdur Rahman, Amir of Afghanistan*, ed. by Mir Munshi Sultan Mahomed Khan, two vols., London, 1900, vol. ii, p. 117.

before dealing with the other measures of his administration to complete the story of the Afghan settlement. The policy of the Liberal government was outlined in Lord Hartington's dispatches of May and November 1880: 'it appears that as the result of two successful campaigns, of the employment of an enormous force, and of the expenditure of large sums of money, all that has yet been accomplished has been the disintegration of the state which it was desired to see strong, friendly and independent, the assumption of fresh and unwelcome liabilities in regard to one of its provinces and a condition of anarchy throughout the remainder of the country'. Therefore the government, 'sharing the opinions of some of the most eminent Indian statesmen of past and present times, and, up to a very recent date, of every minister of the Crown responsible for Indian policy', believed that the consequences of the recent interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan 'have been precisely those which had been foreseen and apprehended by the opponents' of the Lytton policy. 'If the Afghans', added Lord Hartington, 'have ever been disposed to look with more friendship on either their Russian or Persian than their British neighbour, it is not an unnatural result of the fear for the loss of their freedom which our past policy has been calculated to inspire.' The aim of the Cabinet therefore was to return, as far as possible, to the position of affairs before the war, and Lord Ripon was sent out as Viceroy to bring about a peaceful settlement. Lord Lytton's policy in regard to the succession was accepted, and in July Abdur Rahman was formally recognized as Amir of Kabul. The only conditions attached to the recognition were that the Amir was to 'have no political relations with any foreign power except the English', and that the districts of Pishin and Sibi were to be retained in British hands; as long as Abdur Rahman observed the first condition, the British government would aid him to repel the 'unprovoked aggression' of any foreign power. The policy

which had been the main motive for the war was definitely and explicitly given up, and Great Britain bound herself not to require the admission of an English Resident anywhere in Afghanistan. For the present Lord Ripon considered himself bound by the treaty with the ruler of Kandahar to maintain the severance of western from north-western Afghanistan; but he did so with reluctance and the course of events soon gave him an excuse for abandoning this—almost the sole remaining plank of the Lytton policy.

Since Herat at this time was under the control of Ayub Khan, a son of Sher Ali, Abdur Rahman had succeeded to a much-reduced kingdom. Three independent rulers at Kabul, Kandahar and Herat presaged troublous times, and war broke out before British troops had been withdrawn from the country. In June Ayub Khan marched from Herat on Kandahar, and at Maiwand won over a British force under General Burrows one of the most notable victories ever gained by oriental troops in conflict with a European army. The British had 914 men killed and were driven back in full retreat. The only redeeming feature of the battle from our point of view was the glorious conduct of 100 officers and men of the 66th regiment. Surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered they inflicted enormous loss upon the enemy, and held an isolated position till only eleven men were left. Then the survivors charged out of their cover and 'died with their faces to the foe fighting to the death'; 'history does not afford', runs the official dispatch, 'any grander or finer instance of gallantry and devotion to Queen and country'. Ayub Khan after his victory marched on to invest Kandahar, and Roberts was at once sent by Stewart from Kabul to relieve our ally according to the treaty. Roberts with 10,000 men accomplished his historic forced march of 313 miles in twenty days—a wonderful military feat—and completely defeated Ayub Khan at the battle of Kandahar. In spite of the sudden resumption of hostilities Stewart withdrew

his forces from Kabul on the date originally fixed. Roberts remained at Kandahar for a few months, until in 1881 the government decided to evacuate it. Our pledge to support Sher Ali Khan was an embarrassing tie, but he was persuaded to abdicate and retire to India. Though the withdrawal from Kandahar was fiercely resisted by the advocates of the 'Forward' policy and was opposed by Lytton in an able speech in the House of Lords, it was justified by success. Abdur Rahman had never accepted with equanimity the partition of his ancestral kingdom, and it was the recovery of Kandahar that perhaps more than anything else won his fidelity to the British alliance. For a time, however, he seemed in imminent danger of losing not only his newly recovered possession but Kabul as well. When the British troops had departed, Ayub Khan marched again from Herat, occupied Kandahar and held it for several months. Abdur Rahman set out from Kabul to offer him battle. The Indian government watched events with great anxiety. The Amir had hitherto had little opportunity to display ability in the field, while his opponent came to meet him with all the prestige of Maiwand. Few thought that Abdur Rahman could prevail; the relief was great when he won a complete victory near Kandahar in September. Ayub Khan fled into exile in Persia. Herat as well as Kandahar surrendered to the victor, who had once more consolidated together the territories of Dost Muhammad and Sher Ali, and henceforward governed his unruly subjects with great success.

Thus ended Lord Lytton's 'fancy prospect . . . painted on the blank wall of the future of bequeathing to India the supremacy of central Asia and the revenues of a first class power'.[1] Such imaginative political dreams are seldom realized; they are characteristic of the visionary rather than the statesman. The famous words of Lord Beaconsfield's last public speech seem to show that even he, though

[1] *Letters*, vol. ii, p. 200.

late in the day, realized at last the lessons of the Afghan war: 'The key of India is not Merv or Herat or Kandahar. The key of India is London. The majesty and sovereignty, the spirit and vigour of your Parliaments, the inexhaustible resources of a free, an ingenious and a determined people, these are the keys of India.'[1]

[1] Since this chapter was in type, vol. vi of Mr. G. E. Buckle's *Life of Disraeli* has appeared. The hitherto unpublished letters and papers, there quoted, shed some new light upon the Afghan policy of the Conservative Government of 1874–80, deepen the responsibility of Lord Lytton for the war and show that, in the concluding stages, Ministers strongly disapproved of the unwise measures which precipitated the conflict. Both Beaconsfield and Salisbury, though in public they loyally supported their colleague, deprecated Lytton's haste in sending the Chamberlain Mission. In September 1878 the Prime Minister wrote to Lord Cranbrook, 'He (Lytton) was told to wait until we had received the answer from Russia to our remonstrance. I was very strong on this, having good reasons for my opinion. He disobeyed us. I was assured by Lord Salisbury that, under no circumstances, was the Khyber Pass to be attempted. Nothing would have induced me to consent to such a step. He was told to send the Mission by Kandahar. He has sent it by the Khyber. . . .' Beaconsfield admired Lytton's manifestoes and dispatches, and declared 'with Lytton's general policy I entirely agree. I have always been opposed to, and deplored, masterly inactivity', but he recognized that wider imperial interests required peace with Russia. Lytton's policy, he wrote to Salisbury in October, 'is perfectly fitted to a state of affairs in which Russia was our assailant; but Russia is not our assailant. She has sneaked out of her hostile position, with sincerity, in my mind, but scarcely with dignity, and if Lytton had only been quiet and obeyed my orders, I have no doubt that, under the advice of Russia, Sher Ali would have been equally prudent.' From Beaconsfield's report to the Queen of the Cabinet meeting of October 25 it is clear that the Government only entered on the war with the greatest reluctance. Lord Cairns, Sir Stafford Northcote, Cross, and Lord Salisbury were all against it, and the latter, writes the Prime Minister, 'said that the Viceroy was "forcing the hand of the Government", and had been doing so from the very first; he thought only of India and was dictating, by its means, the foreign policy of the Government in Europe and Turkey. He had twice disobeyed orders: first in acting on the Khyber Pass; secondly in sending the Mission contrary to the most express and repeated orders that he was not to do so, till we had received an expected dispatch from Russia. . . . He (Salisbury) spoke with great bitterness of the conduct of the Viceroy, and said that, unless curbed, he would bring about some terrible disaster.'

CHAPTER VII

INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION UNDER LORD LYTTON

THE chief event of Lord Lytton's Viceroyalty apart from the Afghan war was the appalling famine of 1876–8, the most severe on record as regards loss of life. It was terribly prolonged, lasting over two years and affecting most of southern India, Madras, Bombay, Hyderabad, and Mysore, and in the second year, parts of central India and the Punjab. The scourges of fever and cholera followed in its wake. It was impossible to stave off a calamity of this nature as the comparatively local scarcity of Bihar had been staved off by Lord Northbrook in 1874, nor could the Indian government contemplate an expenditure proportionately lavish over an area so much wider. The efforts to save life were made with a due—some critics said an excessive—regard to economy; 'speaking generally', says the writer in the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 'the administration of relief was as strict on this occasion as it had been lax in Bihar'. The Madras authorities at first embarked on an over-generous system of relief, but Lord Lytton sent Sir Richard Temple to report on their methods, and in the late summer himself visited the Presidency. His own view was that the lavish relief measures adopted there were not only more wasteful but actually less efficacious in saving life than the more economical system in Bombay. 'We are fighting', he wrote, 'a desperate battle with nature, and our line of battle has been completely broken at Madras.' Although a sum of eleven millions sterling was expended from the Indian

treasury and charitable funds, more than five million people are said to have perished in British territory alone, two million acres of land were temporarily thrown out of cultivation, and the loss of land revenue to the exchequer was over £2,250,000.

It was henceforward decided that the Indian government should not, as in the past, deal with each famine empirically when it occurred, but that preventive and anticipatory measures should be taken. Two means to accomplish this end were adopted. A famine commission with General Richard Strachey as President conducted an exhaustive inquiry during 1878–80 into the whole question of famines and the granting of relief, and laid down careful regulations for future guidance. The main principle adopted was the finding of employment for the able-bodied on relief works at a wage sufficient to maintain health, and the giving of gratuitous help only to the impotent poor. Secondly it was decided henceforward to budget for an annual surplus of £1,500,000 over the ordinary revenue—which surplus was to be used partly for the reduction or avoidance of debt, so that the state might more easily bear the exceptional drain on her resources necessary in the periodical return of years of famine, partly for the construction of railways and canals through districts where drought was especially prevalent. The money was raised by a licence tax on trades and professions producing more than £200 a year and by new 'cesses' (or taxes) on land. Lord Lytton, says Mr. V. A. Smith, 'deserves high credit for sound views on famine policy, thoroughly thought out and expressed with forceful lucidity. The whole existing system of famine administration rests on the foundations well and truly laid by him.'

Lord Lytton's period of office was notable for the great fiscal reforms carried out by Sir John Strachey, who in 1876 left the lieutenant-governorship of the North-West Provinces at the Viceroy's request to become financial member of

council. One of the most important sources of revenue in India is the salt tax. It had hitherto been levied at very different rates in different provinces, and to prevent smuggling from one province to another and the importation of untaxed salt from native states into British territory, an inland customs line made of impenetrable cactus hedge, wall, and ditch stretched across India from Attock on the Indus to the Mahanadi in the Deccan, a distance of 2,500 miles. It had to be patrolled by an army of revenue officers 12,000 in number; Indian finance ministers had long desired to abolish this fiscal anachronism, but to do so two things were necessary—the manufacture of salt in native states had to be controlled, and the salt tax in the various British provinces had to be equalized. Some preliminary steps in regard to the first of these measures had been already taken under Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook by negotiations with the protected chiefs, and Lord Northbrook had been enabled to shorten the customs line at its southern end by 1,000 miles. Sir John Strachey now concluded agreements with other native states producing salt, by which in return for compensation they surrendered control of its manufacture. Though he could not sacrifice enough revenue to equalize the salt duties entirely, the variations were brought within so narrow a margin that it no longer paid to transport salt from one province to another, and the remaining 1,500 miles of the customs line were swept away.

Sir John Strachey made another important advance in the direction of establishing Free Trade in India. In the tariff of 1878 he abolished the duty on sugar levied at the inland customs line, and remitted import duties on twenty-nine commodities. The avowed desire of himself and the Viceroy was to make India one great free port open to the commerce of the world, and the only reason they did not go farther still in the realization of this aim was that the great strain put upon their resources by the Afghan war and the

famine made any further sacrifice of revenue impossible. Controversy centred mainly round the five per cent. *ad valorem* import dues hitherto levied on cotton manufactured goods at Indian ports. The Lancashire manufacturers had long been clamouring for their abolition, and in July 1877 the House of Commons passed a resolution without a division that 'the duties now levied upon cotton manufactures imported into India, being protective in their nature, are contrary to sound commercial policy and ought to be repealed without delay as soon as the financial condition of India will permit'. In India, however, there was much popular, and some official, opposition to any modification of the duties. The majority of the Viceroy's council strongly opposed the change on the ground that it was not a fitting time to give up duties, which, they maintained, had no real protective effect at all. They regarded the proposal as 'one which has been adopted not in the interest of India, not even in the interest of England, but in the interest or the supposed interest of a political party, the leaders of which deem it necessary at any cost to retain the political support of the cotton manufacturers of Lancashire'.[1] But there can be little doubt that both the Cabinet and the Viceroy were honestly convinced (for orthodox political economy was then almost unchallenged) that there was no real conflict between Indian and English interests, and that both countries would ultimately benefit by the abolition, or at least the lowering, of the duties. Accordingly, in 1879, the duties were removed on the coarser kinds of cotton cloth, on which the protective nature of the impost had most effect. To carry this measure Lytton was obliged to use his constitutional right to override the majority of his council—the only instance of the exercise of this exceptional power in recent times. The great expansion in oversea trade following the abolition of the duties fully justified, at any rate from the

[1] Minute of Sir Alexander Arbuthnot, March 15, 1879.

purely economic point of view, the Free Trade policy. The passing of the Southern India Agricultural Relief Act in 1879, which curtailed the money-lender's power of distraining on his peasant debtor's holding, shows that the Viceroy and his Council were not mere *doctrinaires* in their general adherence to the policy of *laisser faire*.

In 1877, by giving the provincial governments a share in the revenues instead of a fixed grant from the imperial treasury, Sir John Strachey extended and developed the system of financial decentralization which had been begun in 1870 on his own and his brother's advice by Lord Mayo. Altogether his tenure of office as finance minister was a notable landmark in Indian fiscal history and it was only marred by one most unfortunate blunder. In May 1880, to quote the Viceroy, 'the tremendous discovery' was made that the war estimates, prepared by the Military, and accepted by the Financial Department, were utterly worthless and would be indefinitely exceeded. Lord Lytton foresaw much 'public scandal and reproach', and indeed at the time the government was accused by political opponents of intentional concealment and deception. But though the miscalculation was enormous—over twelve millions in excess of the estimates, the total charges being seventeen and a half millions instead of five—the error was due to a faulty system of account-keeping in the Military Department. At the same time it must be admitted that Sir John Strachey and the Viceroy, knowing how military operations had been prolonged, exhibited a rather confiding trust in the remarkably low figures supplied to them by their Military Accountant-General, and they can hardly be acquitted of a lack of vigilance in the matter. It was fortunate that Sir John Strachey's financial reforms and his step in the direction of Free Trade had so improved the Indian revenues that fifteen millions of the war charges—the proportion falling on the Indian exchequer—were paid for out of revenue. The balance

of five millions was discharged by the imperial treasury, and in view of the fact that the war was mainly due to Lord Beaconsfield's opposition to Russia in Europe for reasons of general imperial policy, there was some reason in the contention that a larger proportionate share might have been discharged by the British government.

By the founding of the Statutory Civil Service in 1879 the Indian government made a rather belated attempt to give some reality to the promise of the Charter Act of 1833, reaffirmed by the royal proclamation of 1858, that no native of British India should be debarred, by reason of his nationality, from holding any place or office. The Act of 1853 had indeed formally opened the higher or covenanted civil service (so called because its members on appointment entered into a covenant not to trade or receive presents) to all subjects of the Crown, whether British or Indian, by a competitive examination. But as that examination was held in England, all but a very few Indian subjects were practically debarred from competing. It appeared therefore to the more liberal school of Indian statesmen that, in regard to the higher judicial and administrative posts, some 864 in number, the promises of the East India Company and the Crown were hardly being fulfilled. On the other hand, it was pointed out that a great preponderance of men of British origin was only found in the case of the highest posts; that it is always necessary this should be so; and that practically the whole of the much larger subordinate or uncovenanted civil service, which included in its upper grades positions of no mean importance and responsibility, was in the hands of native Indians. The more conservative school held that this fact was in itself a sufficient fulfilment of the promises of 1833 and 1858 and that, if more than this was meant, then that those promises had been too rashly given. In spite of this, attempts were made from time to time to bestow upon men of Indian origin a greater share in the

covenanted civil service. Lord Lawrence introduced a short-lived system of scholarships to be won in India and held in Great Britain for three years. The next step was taken by the Duke of Argyll in 1870, who carried an Act of Parliament enabling the government in India, with the approval of the Secretary of State, to frame rules by which native Indians might be appointed to some of the posts hitherto held by members of the covenanted civil service, without the necessity of passing the examination in London. But the Duke of Argyll obviously approached the question with extreme caution, suggesting that Indian candidates should be selected mainly for judicial, and rarely, if at all, for executive posts. If the Secretary of State was lukewarm in his advocacy of the proposed change, the Indian government was decidedly cold, and though much correspondence ensued, the various rules framed were either disallowed by the home government or found to be practically useless. Lord Lytton's policy, as stated by himself, was 'Define more clearly the promises which have been given so vaguely and indeed so rashly. Cautiously circumscribe them, but then make them realities within their necessary limits.' In accordance with this theory, his government in 1878–9 produced the plan of the Statutory Civil Service. One-sixth of the posts hitherto held by the covenanted civil service, together with some of the most important in the uncovenanted service, were henceforward to be filled by men of Indian birth nominated by the local governments in India with the approval of the Viceroy in Council and the Secretary of State; the candidates were to serve two years of probation and to pass special tests before their final appointment. The authorities in India would have preferred to make the new scheme dependent upon the exclusion of Indian candidates from the competitive examination in London, but this suggestion was disallowed by the India Office. Native Indians had therefore henceforward not only a close service

of their own but a legal right to fill as many places in the covenanted service as their abilities would enable them to win. The Statutory Civil Service in public estimation held a position mid-way between the covenanted and the uncovenanted or subordinate service, though its status was to be legally equivalent to that of the former. It was on the whole not a success. It failed to attract the higher classes and was mainly recruited from men who would normally have entered the subordinate service; accordingly eight years later, as we shall see, it was abolished.

In 1878 Lord Lytton passed his much-criticized Vernacular Press Act, which empowered a magistrate or collector to require the editor of a newspaper written in an oriental language either to enter into a bond to publish nothing likely to excite feelings of dissatisfaction against the government and antipathy between persons of different races, castes, and religions, or to submit his proofs to an officer appointed by government. Lord Lytton held that the seditious tone of the vernacular newspapers at that time rendered necessary some limitation to 'the exceptional tolerance' with which the government had hitherto regarded 'the occasional misuse of an instrument confided to unpractised hands', and he spoke of the liberty of the press as 'a privilege to be worthily earned and rationally enjoyed' rather than 'a fetish to be worshipped'. The opposition, which included three dissentient members of council, contended that the excesses of a few foolish journalists were not sufficient ground for repressive legislation; that the Indian government was showing itself too sensitive to attack; and that the differential treatment meted out to the English and vernacular press was highly invidious. There was much force in these criticisms, though the Viceroy tried to meet the last by pointing out that the distinction between vernacular and English papers was not necessarily, or altogether, one of race, because many papers edited by Indians were printed in English. The Act

was in any case short lived, and was repealed by Lord Lytton's successor four years later.

No Viceroy in modern times has been subjected to fiercer criticism than Lord Lytton, and the reasons are not far to seek. His Afghan policy was condemned by the greatest Indian authorities in England, by the leaders of the Liberal party, and finally in no uncertain way by a majority of the nation. It was indeed a calamitous and unrighteous blunder, and on that head alone Lord Lytton's claims to statesmanship are justly forfeit. The great loss of life in the famine of 1878–80, the measures taken to limit the freedom of the press, the miscalculation in the estimates of the war charges, all these things naturally gave ground for criticism. Yet no one can read Lord Lytton's minutes and dispatches without realizing that he was a man of more than ordinary gifts. Though often hasty and impulsive, he brought some new and fruitful conceptions into the field of Indian politics. Many of his unrealized ideas only failed of realization because they were before their time. He advocated the introduction of a gold standard into the monetary system of India, and, had the change been made then, when the depreciation of silver was but beginning, India would have been saved great economic loss. He suggested the creation of a north-west frontier province under the direct control of the government of India instead of the lieutenant-governorship of the Punjab —a reform which was afterwards carried out in the time of Lord Curzon. He proposed the enrolment of an Indian peerage, and the formation of an Indian Privy Council of the ruling chiefs to consult with and advise the Viceroy. He tried to stop the tendency to pass too lenient sentences on Europeans who had assaulted their Indian servants. In a material and matter-of-fact generation he did not undervalue the effects of sentiment, pomp, and pageantry either on eastern or western minds, and his stately eloquence

and striking presence effectively graced a great occasion. It is difficult now to understand the opposition and even ridicule aroused in England by the Royal Titles Bill, which conferred the title of Kaisar-i-Hind upon the sovereign of England. It stirred the personal loyalty of the great Indian princes, and without having the purely Muhammadan associations of the title *Padishah*, which would have alienated the Hindus, it suggested the vanished majesty of the Mughal empire and the political union of the Indian peoples beneath the sway of one great imperial throne. The opposition leaders in Parliament resisted the passage of the Bill on constitutional grounds, holding that the title of 'Queen' implied obedience to law, while that of 'Empress' signified the supremacy of force. ('We have seen him', said Lord Hartington, 'mimicking at Delhi the fallen state of the Mogul empire.' 'If it be true', said Gladstone, 'and it is true, that we have not been able to give India the benefits and blessings of free institutions, I leave it to the right honourable gentleman (Disraeli) to boast that he is about to place the fact solemnly on record: . . . I for one will not attempt to turn into glory that which, as far as it is true, I feel to be our weakness and our calamity.') Such language has to-day an unconvincing ring; it put an unnecessary construction on the meaning of the imperial title, was certainly unjust to the great achievements in social reform of Indian statesmen, and overlooked the fact that India is not altogether a congenial soil for the full development of mid-nineteenth-century Liberalism. Official opinion in India, though for different reasons, was not at first enthusiastic. Quiet unostentatious work, rather than outward show, is the honourable tradition of the civil service. When Lord Lytton proclaimed Queen Victoria Empress of India on January 1, 1877, in a durbar of unsurpassed magnificence, the famine was already casting the shadow of poverty and death over southern India, and many held that the hour

was ill chosen for so gorgeous a pageant. But ceremonials of this nature can hardly be postponed, and the members of the civil service, as they stood in the great assembly on the famous Ridge, must have recognized that there was a measure of political wisdom in occasionally displaying to the ruling princes and their ministers not only the dry results of a sound administration but something of the might and splendour of that empire in which both British servants of the Crown and Indian rulers and statesmen occupied each his appointed place.

CHAPTER VIII

LORD RIPON AND THE ERA OF CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

AFTER the settlement with Afghanistan, Lord Ripon was not called upon to deal with any other serious question of foreign policy. His own interest, like that of Lord William Bentinck, whose Indian career in many points resembled his own, lay in the field of political and social reform. Lord Ripon was indeed of a different stamp from the typical Viceroy, and in his whole political outlook was the very antithesis of his immediate predecessor. He was a true Liberal of the Gladstonian era, with a strong belief in the virtues of peace, *laisser faire*, and self-government. Hitherto the great material benefits conferred upon India had been almost entirely the work of an enlightened and disinterested bureaucracy, which was more concerned to labour for the people than to train them for political duties. This aspect of our Indian empire was in its early stages natural enough. 'The English nation in India', said Burke, 'is nothing but a seminary for the succession of officers. They are a nation of placemen. They are a republic, a commonwealth without a people. They are a state made up wholly of magistrates.' 'In India', said Sir Robert Montgomery in 1871, 'we set aside the people altogether; we devise and say that such a thing is a good thing to be done and we carry it out without asking them very much about it.' Among men of Indian race who had received an education on English lines there was growing up a strong and altogether natural desire to play a more active part in the administration of their country,

and to introduce into the East those conceptions of constitutional and representative government with which their newly acquired western knowledge made them, in theory at any rate, acquainted.

With these aspirations Lord Ripon heartily sympathized, and he was determined to take some forward steps in the direction of liberalizing the Indian government. His views, as was natural, met with considerable opposition from a majority of officials, and whether the trend he gave to British policy in India was good or evil in its results is still regarded by many as an open question. To one party of Indian administrators, at any rate, he seemed to move too fast and too far, to put too unquestioning a trust in certain *doctrinaire* and *a priori* articles in the Liberal creed, to overlook the fact that western institutions, which require, even in the home of their origin, a long and painful experience for efficient working, rarely admit of being transplanted to eastern soil, and finally to have paid excessive attention to the aims of a small though clamorous section of society, which had little real sympathy with, or claims to represent, the great mass of the peoples of India.

But many Englishmen recognized that some advance in this direction was now inevitable. We ourselves had educated the rising generation—had inspired them with ideals and ambitions, and we could not stultify our own policy by keeping them in a permanent state of tutelage. Support sometimes came to Lord Ripon from quarters whence it might have been least expected. 'Men who really sympathise with the natives', wrote Lord Northbrook in 1880, 'do not grow on the hedges in the official hierarchy', and he declared in 1884 that the civil service 'with all their magnificent qualities have strongly ingrained in their minds, except some of the very best of them like Mr. Elphinstone and George Clerk of old and Aitchison, Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab now, that no one but an

Englishman can do anything. . . . Ripon's main lines of policy in these respects have my cordial support.'[1] It need not, however, be assumed that those who honestly dissented from the new policy were swayed by any unworthy motives of jealousy or race hatred. Even in western lands the progress of a nation along the path of self-government is at first slow and halting, and the 'unforeseen tendencies of democracy' present many unlovely features. Lord Ripon's opponents were not prepared to look with equanimity on the sacrifice of efficiency, which to some extent was necessarily involved in handing over departments of administration from highly trained officials to nominated or elected boards, and they often imagined that Lord Ripon ignored this consequence of his policy. But he had not ignored it. He was prepared to face it. 'It is not primarily with a view to improvement in administration', ran the resolution introducing one of his reforms, 'that this measure is put forward and supported. It is chiefly desirable as an instrument of political and popular education.' With the robust faith in democracy that was characteristic of him, he wished that Indians should learn even in the hard school of experience and disillusion the lessons of self-government and self-control.

We may now deal with Lord Ripon's policy more in detail under the headings of (i) Tariff and Revenue, (ii) the Decentralization of Administration and Financial Control, (iii) Freedom of the Press, (iv) Education, (v) the Protected States, (vi) Social Reforms.

In regard to the first of these points Lord Ripon was fortunate in his time. Financial circumstances were peculiarly favourable to experiments in internal reform. The great fiscal measures of Sir John Strachey now bore fruit, and there ensued four years of prosperity with an elastic and rising revenue. Surpluses instead of deficits became

[1] Mallet's *Northbrook*, p. 133.

normal features of Indian budgets. A few years later the conditions would have been less favourable, because famine, plague, the rapid fall of exchange, and increased military expenditure were destined to impose a severe strain upon the Indian exchequer. The Indian government seized the opportunity of favourable seasons to complete the Free Trade policy begun by Lord Northbrook and developed by Lord Lytton. In 1882 Major Evelyn Baring (afterwards Earl of Cromer), the finance minister, removed from the tariff all the five per cent. *ad valorem* import duties which could have any protective force. The only dues left were those on articles such as salt, wines and spirits, subject to internal excise, and one on ammunition and arms, retained for purely political reasons. In the same year the salt tax was lowered throughout India. But in one important point, that of land revenue, Lord Ripon was not able to carry his policy. In 1883, as we have seen (see p. 395), the home government had finally abandoned the proposal which had been before them for twenty years, of establishing a permanent settlement of the land revenues throughout India. Lord Ripon now suggested an alternative course, namely, that in districts, which had once been surveyed and assessed, the government should pledge itself to make no further enhancement except on the sole ground of a rise in prices. This compromise would have happily combined the ideal of comparative permanency with that of a certain incidence, while leaving to the government an open door for an increase of revenue if there was a general rise in prosperity. The moderate reform party in India has always deeply, and with good reason, regretted that it was not accepted by the Secretary of State.

The reforms under the second of our main headings, viz. the decentralization of administrative and financial control, were the most important of all and were those especially associated in the popular mind with Lord Ripon's adminis-

tration. They are not very easy to summarize, but it may be said that by them the people were granted in matters of local and municipal administration a greater and more real share in the management and superintendence of their own affairs. A system of local boards or corporations was established, beginning with the unit of revenue administration known as the 'tahsil' or 'taluka'. These boards were entrusted with the management of such funds as the government of the province considered them capable of administering. To larger bodies was given the charge of public works, education, and similar public duties. Wherever possible the election by rate-payers of representatives to the corporations rather than their nomination by government was to be introduced. This was no new principle, popular election having been sanctioned in the municipal government of Bombay in 1872 and afterwards adopted in the other Presidency towns and elsewhere, but the practice was now greatly extended. The corporations of many towns were henceforward allowed to elect independent members as chairmen in place of the executive officer who had before this guided their deliberations. 'It was the policy of Lord Ripon's government', says Mr. R. Nathan, 'to substitute outside control for inside interference in municipal matters.'[1] Some control assuredly was, and still is, necessary. The proper working of free institutions is not to be learnt in a generation, and so, while municipalities are required to undertake some duties, encouraged to attempt others, and given certain financial powers and responsibilities, they are usually controlled by a district collector or commissioner of the division. The government in regard to municipalities retains powers of inspection, of providing for neglected duties, and even of suspension in case of gross default.

In the third place Lord Lytton's Vernacular Press Act

[1] *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. iv, p. 289.

was removed from the statute book, and newspapers written in oriental languages were thus again allowed equal freedom with the rest of the Indian press in dealing with social and political questions; a freedom which later on was unhappily in some cases abused.

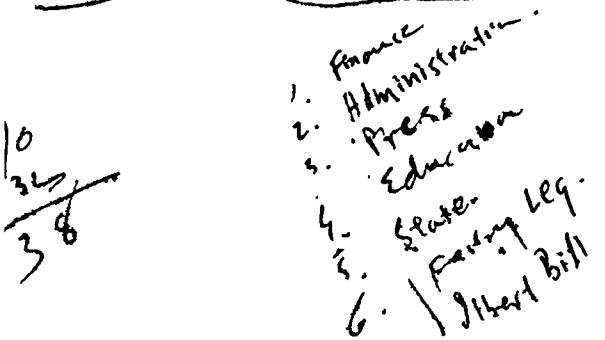
Fourthly, a commission of twenty members, under the presidency of Mr. (afterwards Sir) W. W. Hunter, inquired into the extent to which the principles of the Court of Directors' dispatch of 1854 had been carried out. The result was that regulations were laid down for the increase and improvement of primary and secondary schools, hitherto, in comparison with the universities, rather neglected by the state.

Fifthly, in the relations of the British government to native states, it was peculiarly fitting that it should fall to Lord Ripon to carry out by the 'rendition' of Mysore a notable act of grace to a Hindu dynasty, but the credit of this act belongs to Lord Lawrence and to Sir Stafford Northcote, who had determined on this policy in 1867. The actual administration of Mysore, it will be remembered, was sequestrated in 1831 by Lord William Bentinck owing to the misgovernment of the raja set upon the throne, as a minor, by Lord Wellesley in 1799. Lord William Bentinck afterwards came to believe that he had been to some extent misled by exaggerated reports of oppression in Mysore, but the Company declined to reverse the sequestration. The deposed raja died in 1867, and the British government then decided that his adopted son, as soon as he came of age, should be re-invested with the rule of Mysore. This event occurred in 1881, and he was installed with due ceremony by Lord Ripon, though very stringent regulations were made to prevent the country losing the benefits of British rule which it had enjoyed for half a century. All laws in force at the time were to be maintained and efficiently administered, no material change in the system of govern-

ment was to be made without the consent of the Governor-General in Council, all settlements of land revenue were to be maintained, and the raja was to conform to such advice as the Governor-General might give him on details of administration.

Lastly, in social matters a modest beginning was made—not before it was necessary—of legislation to regulate and improve the conditions of labour in Indian factories. An act was passed in 1881 restricting the hours of employment of children between seven and twelve years of age to nine hours a day, requiring that dangerous machinery should be properly fenced, and appointing inspectors. In 1883 the Indian government found itself involved in terrible stress and turmoil arising from the delicate and difficult question of race distinction. By the criminal procedure code of 1873 it was enacted that no magistrate or sessions judge could try an European British subject unless he were himself of European birth, though in the Presidency towns this rule did not apply. By 1883 some of the Indian members of the covenanted civil service had risen by seniority to the stage when they would become magistrates or judges in the courts of sessions, and it was felt to be highly invidious that they should not possess the same rights as their European colleagues in the service. The Indian government accordingly determined to abolish 'judicial disqualifications based on race distinctions'. Mr. (now Sir) C. P. Ilbert prepared a Bill for this purpose. In spite of the fact that the change would have affected very few cases, and that no evil had resulted from Europeans appearing before Indian judges in the Presidency towns, a fierce and persistent agitation against the Bill immediately sprang up among Europeans in India. Indian opinion, as was natural, enthusiastically supported the proposed change. Deplorable bad feeling and animosity ensued between the contending parties. The reform was almost as much disliked by the

rank and file of the civil service as by the non-official European residents in India. The Viceroy was subjected to something very like insult, and practically all intercourse ceased between him and those of his countrymen who were unconnected with the government. In the end the authorities were forced to bow before the storm, and agreed to a compromise which practically amounted to a surrender of the principle for which they were contending. It was decided that every European subject brought before a district magistrate or sessions judge (whether an Indian or European) could claim to be tried by a jury, half of whom were to be Europeans or Americans. As Indians could not make a similar claim, the privileged position of Europeans was still maintained, and the endeavour of the government to remove race distinctions was thus completely foiled. But if Lord Ripon had forfeited popularity among his countrymen he had at any rate won, by his championship of their cause, the enthusiastic devotion and support of men of Indian birth. On his resignation, in 1884, the route of his journey to Bombay was lined with acclaiming and admiring crowds, and his name has ever since been enshrined in the hearts of the nationalist party in India as the great champion of their cause on the Viceregal throne.



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CHAPTER IX

LORD DUFFERIN. ENGLAND, RUSSIA, AND AFGHANISTAN. THE CONQUEST OF UPPER BURMA

LORD RIPON was succeeded by the Earl of Dufferin, whose long public career in politics and diplomacy gave him the best possible preliminary training for his high office. He had been Under-Secretary of State for India twenty years before (1864-6) when Sir John Lawrence was Viceroy; from 1872-8 he had been Governor-General of Canada; he had then become successively Ambassador at St. Petersburg and Constantinople, and special British Commissioner in Egypt. In the first of these diplomatic posts he was brought into close relation with Great Britain's chief rival in Asia, and in the other two he had an opportunity of studying the methods and policy of the first Muhammadan power in the world.

Lord Dufferin was one of the foremost diplomatists of his time, an eloquent and graceful speaker, and a man of great personal charm. He was therefore peculiarly well fitted to smooth away the exasperation and bitterness engendered by the controversy on the Ilbert Bill. He met the crisis with tact, a sense of humour, and a determination not to allow a question of social and personal rights to become a dangerous political issue. The turbulent waves of this unhappy tempest of race feeling gradually subsided before the suave and masterly inactivity of a Viceroy who was so thoroughly, in the best sense of the phrase, a man of the world. But Lord Dufferin was rather old for a Viceroy, he was not eager to attack new problems or initiate new

policies, and he was content to keep a light hand on the reins of administration. He addressed himself to the tasks of his office with the ability and tolerance borne of his long political experience in many lands, but there is sometimes a hint of weariness in his attitude, and after four years had elapsed he asked to be relieved of his duties before the full period of his appointment had expired.

Questions of foreign policy again became prominent in his time, one on the north-western frontier and another on the extreme eastern boundary line.

Abdur Rahman since the cession of Kandahar had consolidated his power in Afghanistan at the cost of much hard fighting and had reduced his subjects to an unwonted condition of obedience and order. It was certainly as well both for the 'buffer' state itself and for the Indian empire that this process of consolidation should have been coming to completion just as the tidal waters of the Russian advance were breaking on the northern outposts of Afghanistan. In 1876 the khanate of Khokand had been finally incorporated into the Russian empire. In 1879 the Russian General Lomakin had suffered a serious defeat at the hands of the Tekke Turcomans, a warlike and virile race, but in 1881 they were vanquished and their territory annexed. In 1884 British dread of Russian designs, which had remained for some time in abeyance, was roused once more to activity by the fall of Mery, a town about 150 miles from the frontier of Afghanistan. A fictitious importance had always been attached to this place by politicians in England and much popular excitement was caused by its passing into Russian hands. In the end this proved advantageous both for India and Afghanistan, for it brought about a better understanding between Great Britain and Russia and the more accurate delimitation of the Afghan boundary line. At one time, however, there was the greatest possible danger of a calamitous sequel. Lord Ripon's government had already

accepted a Russian proposal for a joint commission to demarcate the northern boundary of Afghanistan, and the first meeting of the commissioners, after much delay on the part of Russia, had taken place at Sarakhs on the Persian frontier in October, a month before Lord Dufferin had assumed office. The boundary line in dispute was that lying between the rivers Hari Rud and Oxus. The British commissioners under Sir Peter Lumsden, when they arrived, found the political atmosphere heavily charged with electricity. Both Russians and Afghans, recognizing that possession is nine points of the law, were unscrupulously endeavouring to occupy as much as they could of the debatable land, and were everywhere quietly pushing forward their outposts.

The chief dispute centred round Panjdeh, a village and district a hundred miles due south of Merv where the Murghab and Kushk rivers unite their waters. The whole position was complicated and difficult. The commissioners were subordinate to the Foreign Offices of London and St. Petersburg respectively, and neither the government of India nor the Russian Governor-General of Turkestan had direct control over them. The home government had not yet definitely made up their minds as to the lawful extent of the Afghan claims and were still negotiating with the Russian ambassador in London. To add to Lord Dufferin's anxieties, he had not only to maintain the interests of the Indian government but to act also for Abdur Rahman who, as Sir Alfred Lyall pertinently observes, 'could not be much blamed for the profound distrust with which he usually regarded the acts and motives of the two foreign states which were saving him the trouble of laying down his own frontier'.[1]

The Russian General Komaroff, a rough and hot-tempered

[1] Article, 'India under the Marquis of Dufferin', *Edinburgh Review*, January 1889.

soldier, found some Afghan troops already in possession of Panjdeh, which appears undoubtedly up to this time to have been looked upon as belonging to the Amir. He promptly ordered them to evacuate the place and on their refusal attacked them and drove them out with heavy loss. The position was now extremely critical. Russia, in order to support her claims, had been moving forces from Transcaspia towards Afghanistan, and since Herat was only about one hundred and twenty miles south of Panjdeh, the Indian government had been clearing the lines of communication on the north-west frontier and assembling an army corps at Quetta to march across the Amir's country to the relief of Herat in the event of war. There were present therefore all the materials for a serious conflagration, and it looked as though the two empires of Russia and Great Britain were at last destined to drift into that 'war in all parts of the world' which Lord Lawrence had presaged as the penalty for the violation of the Afghan frontier. Indeed when the news came of the outrage at Panjdeh hardly any responsible person in England at the time thought that the danger could be averted. Popular opinion was greatly inflamed against Russia, there was something approaching a panic on the stock exchange, the Conservative opposition were clamorous for strong action, and Gladstone, the Liberal Prime Minister, speaking of the situation as one of extreme gravity, asked for and readily obtained a vote of credit for eleven millions.

The disastrous issue of war was averted by the labours of diplomatists, the tact of Lord Dufferin, and, above all, by the shrewd common sense of Abdur Rahman. Most fortunately at the time of the collision the Amir was actually on a visit to Lord Dufferin at Rawal Pindi. The Afghan, as Sir Alfred Lyall points out, does not regard a border skirmish as a thing about which it is worth while to make unnecessary trouble. The Amir declared that he was not

sure whether Panjdeh really did belong to him, nor did he particularly covet its possession. He would be content to waive his claims to the place in exchange for Zulfikar, which lay about eighty-five miles to the west. The coolness and imperturbability of Abdur Rahman saved the situation, and certainly conferred upon Great Britain some return for the subsidies she had paid him in the past. It is likely enough that the apparent nonchalance of the Amir veiled a very complete grasp of the whole question and a resolute determination to avoid at all costs war between England and Russia of which his own country would necessarily be the theatre. 'Afghanistan', he declared, 'was between two mill stones and it had been already ground to powder.' 'My country', he wrote afterwards in his Autobiography using different imagery, 'is like a poor goat on whom the lion and the bear have both fixed their eyes and without the protection and help of the Almighty Deliverer the victim cannot escape very long.'

Lord Dufferin was able therefore to telegraph home that there was no need to make a *casus belli* of Panjdeh, and that the Afghan boundary commission might resume its work. Accordingly, though Sir Peter Lumsden had been recalled, Sir West Ridgeway continued his labours. The joint commission after long negotiations agreed upon a frontier line from the Hari Rud over the spurs of the Paropamisus range to the low ground of the Oxus valley, but they were unable to come to a satisfactory understanding as to the exact point where the line should touch the Oxus. Accordingly Sir West Ridgeway, after visiting the Amir at Kabul and discussing the matter with Lord Dufferin at Simla, proceeded to England. Finally, after prolonged negotiations between Kabul, Simla, London, and St. Petersburg, the line of demarcation was settled by a protocol signed at St. Petersburg in July 1887. What had been accomplished was of very considerable importance. Sir West Ridgeway

declared that by the new boundary the Amir did not lose a penny of revenue, a single subject, or an acre of land. The settlement of the frontier up to the line of the Oxus put definite limits to the Russian advance in the direction of Herat, which strategists have agreed to look upon, though why is not quite clear, as the key of India. Farther east in the direction of the Pamirs the Russian forward movement still continued until, as we shall see, another Anglo-Russian convention was signed in 1895. 'The boundary pillars', says Sir Alfred Lyall, 'now set up by British and Russian officers on the Hindu Kush and by the Oxus record the first deliberate and practical attempts made by the two European powers to stave off the contact of their incessantly expanding Asiatic empires.'

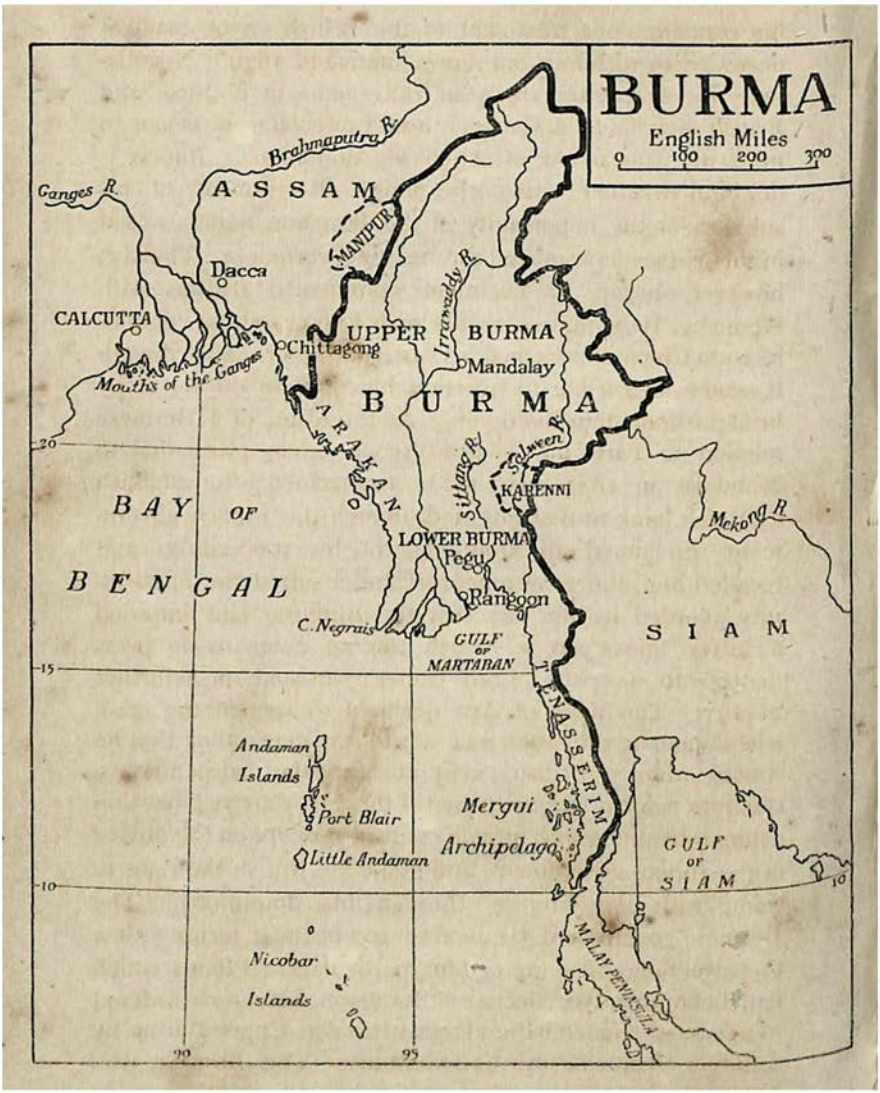
The war scare left enduring marks on the body politic of India. The hurried military preparations laid an extra burden of two millions on the Indian exchequer and were followed by a permanent increase in the strength of the army both native and European. When the crisis was most acute many of the native states spontaneously tendered their services to the government, and from their offer sprang in 1889 the Imperial Service Troops, that is to say, forces available for wars waged by the supreme government 'when placed at the disposal of the British government by their rulers'. They were recruited in the protected states, officered by Indians, and only inspected by British commanders.

Lord Dufferin's conference with the Amir of Afghanistan at Rawal Pindi in 1885 did much to strengthen the latter's goodwill to the British. Sir Alfred Lyall, who was present at the time, has given us a vivid portrait of the Afghan ruler, 'a short burly man dressed in black half-uniform coat decorated with two diamond stars, with long black boots and an astrachan cap; a prince of frank and even bluff yet courtly manners; quite at his ease amid a crowd of

foreigners; speaking pleasantly of the first railway journey he had ever undertaken; a man of some humour in jokes, with a face occasionally crossed by a look of implacable severity—the look of Louis XI or Henry VIII—that is now never seen in civilised life'.

The personal charm and tact of the Viceroy exerted much the same influence over Abdur Rahman as that of Lord Mayo had done over his predecessor Sher Ali, but again it was made clear that the reigning Amir was just as determined as his predecessor had ever been to exclude, at all hazards, British troops and officers from Afghanistan. Lord Dufferin criticized the weakness of the fortifications of Herat and proposed to send English Royal Engineers to strengthen them; but against this suggestion Abdur Rahman was obdurate on the ground that the Afghans would at once imagine that their independence was being attacked, and that mischief would result. Fortunately Lord Dufferin showed greater readiness than Lord Lytton to appreciate the Afghan point of view, and he refrained from pressing his suggestion, recognizing that this intense jealousy for their national integrity would inspire the Afghans with bitter enmity against any people seeking to make their country a base for the invasion of India. Abdur Rahman left the conference gratified with the honours paid to him, impressed by the evidences of India's military strength, and with sentiments of warm friendship for the Viceroy.

On the eastern frontier of the Indian empire the conquest of Burma was completed. The first Burmese war in 1826 had resulted in the annexation of Arakan and Tenasserim, the second in 1852 in that of the province of Pegu. Upper Burma, now cut off from all access to the sea, had hitherto remained independent. The Burmese still refused to give any facilities for British trade within their country. In 1878 the accession to the throne of Thebaw, a cruel despot, and


BURMA
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UPPER BURMA
Irrawaddy R.
Mandalay
BURMA
ARAKAN
Sittang R.
Salween R.
KARENNI
Mekong R.
BAY OF BENGAL
LOWER BURMA
Pegu
Rangoon
C. Negrais
GULF OF MARTABAN
SIAM
TENASSERIM
Andaman Islands
Port Blair
Little Andaman
Mergui Archipelago
GULF OF SIAM
Nicobar Islands
MALAY PENINSULA
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95

his contemptuous treatment of the British envoy made it necessary to withdraw our representative in 1879. Negotiations for a renewed treaty in 1882 came to nothing, and British merchants in Rangoon and Lower Burma began to urge the annexation of Thebaw's dominions. But it is doubtful whether either the king's ill-treatment of his subjects or the importunity of the Rangoon traders would in themselves have moved the Indian government. Thebaw, however, began to negotiate commercial treaties with Germany, Italy, and especially with France, whose colonies in Indo-China approached his eastern frontier. This, though it seems impossible to question his right to do so, really brought upon him his doom. As the result of a Burmese mission to Paris in 1883, a French envoy proceeded to Mandalay in 1885. He made arrangements to establish a French bank in that city and, though the French government disclaimed all knowledge of his proceedings and recalled him, the government of India seized the opportunity afforded by the fact that the Burmese had imposed a heavy fine upon a British trading company to press matters to a crisis. Lord Dufferin insisted on a further inquiry. The King of Ava declined to reopen the case, whereupon an ultimatum was sent to him demanding that he should admit a British envoy at Mandalay, suspend proceedings against the company till the envoy arrived, have no external relations with foreign countries except on the advice of the Indian government, and grant the British the right to trade with the Chinese through his dominions. The Burmese government declined to accept these terms unless they were modified in certain particulars. Troops which had been already collected at Rangoon were now ordered to advance. General Prendergast invaded Upper Burma by a flotilla advancing up the Irrawaddy. The Burmese, who appear to have been taken completely by surprise, made hardly any resistance. The king surrendered unconditionally

when the army approached his capital, and within ten days the first stage of the war was over. On January, 1 1886, Upper Burma, a country with an area rather larger than that of France and a population of four millions, was annexed by a curt proclamation, after the consideration and rejection of two alternative schemes, the first to set up a buffer state, the other to rule it through a British Resident.

But now began the real difficulty of the occupation. Isolated bands of armed men, taking refuge in the dense jungles which cover a great part of the country, maintained a harassing guerrilla warfare that often degenerated into mere brigandage and dacoity. Many British civil and military officers lost their lives. Considerable reinforcements had to be sent into the country, and desultory fighting went on for two years. Upper Burma was only subdued by establishing a system of small fortresses dotted all over the turbulent area, from which as a base, mobile columns operated. Gradually, under Sir Charles Bernard as Chief Commissioner, the settlement of the country was carried out. Skilled civil servants with wonderful celerity set up the machinery of British administration, political divisions were formed, roads, bridges, and railways were built, revenue assessments made, and laws promulgated.

In view of the tremendous difficulties of the task, the criticism passed in England on Lord Dufferin and the Indian government for the prolongation of military operations was certainly unfair; the justice of going to war at all might perhaps be more reasonably called in question. Indeed our action in annexing Burma involves a difficult problem of political casuistry. The whole procedure of the Indian government in the matter was high-handed and rather relentless. It may be conceded that Thebaw was a savage and unenlightened monarch, nor could it be reasonably denied that the bulk of the Burmese people were infinitely

better off under the civilized régime of their new masters. It is also true that the Burmese had treated our traders with contumely, but it would be hypocrisy to maintain that the tyranny of the king or even the impediments he put in the way of British commerce would by themselves have brought about his downfall. 'If . . . the French proceedings', wrote Lord Dufferin before the war began, 'should eventuate in any serious attempt to forestall us in Upper Burma, I should not hesitate to annex the country.'[1] An impartial critic might hold that the French from Indo-China had at least as much right as the British from India to extend their influence over Burma, or even more, seeing that they came into the country at the express invitation of the king, who was, nominally at any rate, independent. But Great Britain rightly or wrongly considered that, having already conquered two-thirds of the Burmese country, she had a kind of latent right—a reversionary lien of annexation—to acquire the rest, rather than that it should pass under the sway of any other European state. The ethics of the relations between powerful western empires and weak eastern nations are admittedly difficult to disentangle, but it is to be feared that the abstract rights of semi-civilized countries receive scant recognition when great colonizing powers converge upon them.

The conquest of Burma involved some modification of India's diplomatic relations with the Chinese empire which claimed a vague suzerainty over that country. Although the claim was at this date merely formal, it could not be altogether ignored by the Indian Government. The circumstances of the time enabled a compromise to be effected. Tibet also owed allegiance to China, and Great Britain had just extracted from Pekin a very reluctant consent to the dispatch of a commercial mission to Lhasa. Now the

[1] *Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava*, by Sir Alfred Lyall, p. 398.

Tibetans themselves had shown very plainly that they intended, whether supported in their action by China or not, to oppose the entry of the mission into their country. A very awkward question therefore was settled in 1886—though to the bitter disappointment of those who had projected the Tibetan business—by an agreement now made with China that the mission should be abandoned on condition that the Chinese waived their claims to sovereignty over Burma and offered no objection to its annexation by Great Britain. There still remained, however, some little difficulty with the Tibetans. The road from India along which the mission was to have proceeded runs through Sikkim, a small independent state under British protection. The Tibetans, in order to bar the path to their country, had already marched into Sikkimese territory and fortified a port at Lingtu. All peaceful means to make them withdraw having failed, and China being either unwilling or unable to coerce them, they were driven back across their own frontier by British troops in 1888.

CHAPTER X

THE ADMINISTRATION OF LORD LANSDOWNE. THE FORWARD POLICY

In December 1888 the Marquis of Lansdowne took over the charge of the government of India. The most serious internal problem of his period of administration was the effect upon the currency system of the great world-decline in the value of silver. This decline was due primarily to the increased production of silver through the opening of new mines, which was one of the chief economic features of the latter part of the nineteenth century. A secondary cause was the demonetization of silver by Germany and the renunciation of bimetallism by the states of the Latin Union. Thus the silver coins, which circulated in most of the important countries of Europe, became henceforward token money only. Some curious economic results followed. None of the countries, whose currency was based upon a gold standard, suffered any appreciable loss. Countries with a silver standard but with few foreign liabilities to meet were affected to only a moderate extent. But silver-standard countries with heavy indebtedness to gold-standard countries were subjected to severe financial strain. India, of course, came under the last category. The bulk of her commercial and monetary dealings are with Great Britain; she is a debtor country in relation to her suzerain, and the balance of her indebtedness, which includes the charges on her public debt, interest on capital invested in India, pensions and India Office expenses, has to be discharged in gold. It is obvious that as the value of silver relative to

that of gold declined, more rupees had to be paid for every pound sterling. The burden tended to become heavier in two ways; every year the rate of the fall of the rupee became accelerated, and owing to augmented imperial burdens following on the annexation of Burma and the growing expenditure on public works of all kinds, the amount of necessary remittances home steadily increased. Originally the value of the rupee was two shillings and threepence; for many years before 1873 it had remained constant at about two shillings. From that date, for the reasons given above, it began to fall, and after 1885, at a rapidly increasing rate. In 1890 the rupee was only worth one shilling and fourpence. The following year owing to special legislation in America there was a momentary rise, but in 1892 the value of the rupee touched bottom at one shilling and a penny.

It would not be easy to exaggerate the economic evils that resulted. The situation in 1894 meant that India through no fault of her own but owing to the interaction of economic world-forces had to pay almost fifty per cent. more than in 1873 to discharge a similar sum in London. It was calculated that in 1892, before the rupee stood at its lowest figure, six millions sterling more than would otherwise have been necessary had to be raised by taxation from the Indian peoples. The fluctuations of exchange produced unexpected deficits, and upset the forecasts of the most painstaking finance minister. They checked the flow of capital from Europe and paralysed commercial and mercantile transactions. The government was forced to restrict expenditure on necessary public works, and was naturally loath, even when prospects were apparently favourable, to remit taxation, which, through an unexpected drop in exchange, might afterwards have to be reimposed. Part of India's increased indebtedness was represented by an excess greater than normal of her exports over her imports, for

none who study the phenomena of international trade will need to be told that the sums due from her were remitted to England in commodities rather than in bullion or specie. Twice as many goods valued in rupees had therefore to be sent to this country to discharge the same sum as expressed in sovereigns as before 1873. But such an artificial stimulus to her oversea trade only benefited one class, the producers of goods for exportation, while it reacted adversely on the general welfare of the community, who were being taxed that producers for export might enjoy this indirect bounty.

To meet their increasing obligations the government had recourse to further taxation. An income tax, which is always peculiarly unpopular in India, was reimposed, and the tax on salt which was both unpopular and, in the eyes of many, retrograde, was enhanced. Even these measures were mere palliatives, and the government warned the Secretary of State that, unless some more permanent remedy could be found, the condition of India would become financially bankrupt and politically dangerous. In 1892 the Indian government had proposed to the Cabinet that a fixed ratio between gold and silver should, if possible, be established by international agreement, or, if that expedient failed, that the Indian mints should be closed to the free coinage of silver with the view of ultimately introducing a gold standard. The International Monetary Conference met at Brussels in November and December 1892 and was attended by Indian representatives, but it separated without agreeing upon any solution. The home government, therefore, on the advice of a committee presided over by Lord Herschell adopted, with some modifications in detail, the second of the alternatives proposed to them, and in 1893 the Indian mints were closed to the unrestricted coinage of silver, gold coin or bullion being received in exchange for rupees at the rate of fifteen for a sovereign or an equivalent

weight of metal. The rupee, however, still continued to fall till 1895 when, as we shall see, the decline was at last checked.

In 1890 a serious outbreak occurred in Manipur, a small independent hill state on the borders of Assam. An interregnum in the government was followed by a disputed succession. The anarchy reached such a pitch that the Viceroy determined to intervene on the ground that 'it is admittedly the right and duty of government to settle the successions in the protected states of India generally'. Quinton, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, was sent with an escort of four hundred men to investigate the causes of the revolution. An attempt to arrest the Senapati, or commander of the army, who had brought about the revolution and usurped the government, failed owing to the rising of the Manipuris. After some fighting the Chief Commissioner and three others were enticed to a conference and murdered under circumstances of the greatest treachery and brutality. The junior officers left in command of the escort lost courage and retreated to British territory, for which conduct they were afterwards cashiered. But the attacks of the Manipuris upon the frontiers of Eastern Bengal were repulsed, the capital was speedily occupied by British troops, and the murderers, including the Senapati himself, were executed. In spite of the provocation given, no annexation followed. The chieftainship was conferred upon a minor chosen from among the cadets of the royal house, and Manipur was administered during his nonage by a British political agent who took the opportunity of abolishing slavery in the state.

Another revolution occurred in a protected dependency at the very opposite extremity of India. In 1892 the Khan of Kalat, besides other cruelties, executed his Wazir together with the victim's father and son. The British government summoned him to Quetta to answer for his crimes, and with

the assent of the Sirdars of Kalat forced him to resign, though they acknowledged his son as his successor.

The Viceroyalty of Lord Lansdowne was marked by a certain activity on the frontier lines of the Indian empire both to the north-east and the north-west, due to the fact that through the absorption of weaker states the great empires of England, Russia, France, and China were tending to converge upon a common centre. Russia's recent extension of her southern Asiatic railways, the advance of France in Indo-China to the line of the Mekong, and the British conquest of Upper Burma had drawn closer the web of international relations of all the powers affected. Their boundaries were not yet conterminous—they had not reached that stage of relative stability—but were in that transitional condition when the spark of political electricity seems most likely to generate explosive forces. It is the modern practice in the East for every great power to have extending outwards from the actual frontier a belt of territory defined by Lord Lansdowne as a 'sphere of influence, within which we shall not attempt to administer the country ourselves, but within which we shall not allow any aggression from without'. These spheres of influence beyond the actual boundary resemble the open ground round a fortress whence trees and buildings have been removed to prevent their affording cover to an enemy; the space is not occupied by the garrison, but it can be swept by their fire if necessary, and no foe would be allowed to establish himself there. So in these over-frontier regions the protecting power, while not interfering in the internal affairs of the people, reserves the right to remove an unfriendly government and to pass through its roads if need arise. The danger is that countries seldom remain permanently in the status of 'spheres of influence'. They tend naturally to be absorbed either with their own consent or by coercion within the political boundary

proper; when this happens, fresh spheres of influence are pushed forward till the outposts of empires advancing from opposite directions tend at last to meet, and form highly dangerous points of contact.

A good deal of work was done in Lord Lansdowne's time in extending and defining British Protectorates, especially on the north-eastern and eastern frontiers. Our influence and authority were spread out over Sikkim—the boundary between that country and Tibet being demarcated—the Lushais who inhabit the hill country north-east of Chittagong, the Chins a little farther east, the Shan states beyond the Irrawaddy, and Karenni, a native state on the eastern Burmese frontier.

On the north-western frontier things did not go so smoothly. Just as Lord Mayo had won the personal regard of the Amir Sher Ali, while a coolness sprang up under his successor Lord Northbrook, so the excellent relations with Abdur Rahman established by Lord Dufferin were not at first maintained with Lord Lansdowne. The great Afghan Amir never really wavered in his friendly attitude towards Great Britain, which was based on a shrewd conception of his own interests, but his feelings towards individual Viceroys varied from cordiality to coldness according as they exhibited a tendency to keep at a respectful distance from his frontier or to draw near to it.

Lord Lansdowne, with his somewhat austere standard of statesmanship and his colder and more reserved temperament, could not have been expected to win, as his predecessor had done, the private friendship of the Amir, and Abdur Rahman resented what he called the Viceroy's 'dictatorial' letters 'advising me upon matters of internal policy in the administration of my kingdom, and telling me how I ought to treat my subjects'. In fact, till the closing years of Lord Lansdowne's period of office there was a marked estrangement between the Afghan and Indian

governments, due to the changed course of British foreign policy. There was, as has been already described, a belt of tribal territory, about 25,000 square miles in extent, between the British frontier and the Afghan boundary line. The tribes nominally owed allegiance to the Amir, who was very jealous of any interference with them, valuing their interposition as a screen between his country and the British lines. He had little control over them for good, though he found it easy, if he wished at any time to embarrass his powerful neighbours, to foment disturbances amongst them. They were always ready on the least encouragement to harry British trade routes and to raid across the frontier; while the Afghan government could always remain discreetly in the background, pleading a regretful incapacity to restrain their turbulent feudatories. The only method of redress open to the Indian government was a punitive expedition from time to time, followed by the destruction of offending villages and a retirement to its own borders. The Forward school had long clamoured for the extension of strategic railways, the definite settlement of an Afghan-British frontier, and the reduction to order of the whole tribal territory. The arguments against this proposal were the heavy cost which would be involved, the great extent of country to be subdued, and, most important of all, the certainty of permanently estranging Abdur Rahman. These considerations weighed heavily with the responsible authorities, who felt rightly that the Indian government should put up with many inconveniences rather than offend the feelings of so important an ally. Nevertheless, while Lord Roberts, who held that a policy of non-interference with the tribes was 'not altogether worthy of a great civilizing power', was Commander-in-Chief, some cautious steps were taken in the direction of the Forward policy, which caused great uneasiness to Abdur Rahman and were not always approved of even by military authorities. 'The border policy of late

years', wrote Sir John Adye, 'has in many instances been too aggressive and regardless of the rights of the tribes.'[1] A strategic railway was completed up to the Bolan Pass, and a general activity was evident along the frontier line from Quetta to Kashmir.

In Kashmir occurred some rather obscure movements and intrigues which have not hitherto been thoroughly elucidated. In 1885 a new Maharaja, Pratap Singh, had succeeded. In 1888 Plowden, the British Resident, was recalled by Lord Dufferin for a tendency to interfere too drastically in the internal affairs of the country. In 1889 Lord Lansdowne, acting on certain vague and indeterminate charges, which were never properly substantiated, took over the government of the country, entrusting it to a council under the control of the British Resident. The action seemed likely to lead to the annexation of Kashmir, and an alarm was raised in the House of Commons. The adjournment of the House was moved by Bradlaugh in July 1890, and a debate ensued. Whether as a result of the action of Parliament, or for some reasons unavowed, the Maharaja was restored in 1905, and no further attempt was made to control the administration in Kashmir.

In 1888 a mission under Mortimer Durand was on the point of starting for Afghanistan to attempt to remove the Amir's apprehensions and justify British policy, but was postponed owing to the rebellion of Ishak Khan, which detained Abdur Rahman for two years on the distant frontier of Afghan Turkestan. As a result the position became still more strained. The Amir looked with great distrust upon British activity in Gilgit, a frontier province of Kashmir. A British officer had been sent there in 1889 owing to a rather needless fear of Russian aggression. His presence was resented by the chiefs of Hunza and Nagar,

[1] *Indian Frontier Policy*, by General Sir John Adye, G.C.B., 1897, p. 58.

two small states owning a loose allegiance to Kashmir. They attacked Gilgit, but were defeated and punished. The real importance of Gilgit is that it gives direct communication with Chitral, a small state with an area rather larger than that of Wales and a population of about 80,000 hardy mountaineers, which commands the easiest and least elevated passes across the Hindu Kush. In 1892 the chief died, and his son only secured himself in the succession after some difficulty. This afforded a pretext for the sending of an English envoy, Dr. Robertson, who arrived in Chitral in 1893. Abdur Rahman looked with great distaste upon the gradual approach of the ubiquitous British agent and the pushing forward of railways to the very mouths of the passes leading into his country. The position was very critical, and Lord Lansdowne admitted that at this time 'all the conditions were calculated to lead' to misconceptions and strained relations'. The statement is fully corroborated from the Afghan side, for Abdur Rahman declared that Afghanistan and Great Britain were brought to the very verge of war. Fortunately the crisis passed away, and before Lord Lansdowne laid down his office a satisfactory settlement was attained. In 1892 it had again been proposed to send a mission to Afghanistan, but in selecting Lord Roberts as the envoy an unfortunate blunder was made, for he had always been a prominent defender of the Forward policy, and the fact that he had played a great part in the Second Afghan War did not make the choice of the Indian government any the more tactful. The Amir, who had no intention of receiving Lord Roberts, played his cards astutely. He announced that owing to troubles in the Hazara country and the state of his health he could fix no date for receiving the mission. Having thus delayed matters till Lord Roberts had left India, he proclaimed himself ready to receive Sir Mortimer Durand, who was appointed envoy. The reception of this mission and the

task it accomplished show how great a change had passed over the Afghan-Indian problem, and how thoroughly Abdur Rahman held his turbulent subjects in hand. Once more a British envoy entered the city with its sinister memories of his two predecessors, Burnes and Cavagnari, done to death. Durand proceeded without an escort, his protection being left solely to the troops of the Amir. He entered Kabul on October 2 and left it on November 16. Within that time all causes of friction with Abdur Rahman were investigated, a thoroughly satisfactory settlement of all disputed points was negotiated, and an important agreement signed. The Amir engaged for the future not to interfere with the Afridis, Waziris, and other frontier tribes. The boundary line where possible was to be demarcated by Afghan and British commissioners. Certain districts were ceded to Abdur Rahman, and in return he agreed not to interfere in Swat, Bajur, Dir, or Chitral, and gave up his claims to the railway station at Chaman. The Indian government promised to raise no objections to the purchase and importation by the Amir of munitions of war, and increased his subsidy from twelve to eighteen lacs of rupees. Cordial relations between the two governments were now completely restored. Abdur Rahman, declaring that his officials had been driven out of Waziristan and other places, and that the new Chaman railway station had been built on his territory without permission, prophesied—and with truth as the sequel proved—that war would some day break out in the tribal country. He summed up shrewdly the results of the mission by saying: 'Sir Mortimer Durand's mission reconciled matters by giving me some sort of compensation, and I am quite contented and satisfied that I have gained more than I have lost by British friendship. I merely mention these facts to show... that though England does not want any piece of Afghanistan, still she never loses a chance of getting one—and this

friend has taken more than Russia has.' Further, the Amir accepted an invitation to come to England, but was ultimately prevented by illness from carrying out his intention. His second son, Nasrullah Khan, was sent to represent him in 1895, but his visit proved a failure; Abdur Rahman was disappointed that his request to have a representative at the Court of St. James was not granted.

When Lord Lansdowne laid down his office in 1893 the viceroyalty was offered to Lord Cromer, who 'for private reasons' declined it. It was then accepted by Sir Henry Norman, the Governor of Queensland, but after the lapse of sixteen days he, too, asked to be relieved of the office, considering after reflection that his advanced years (he was sixty-five) rendered him unequal to so heavy a burden. The government appointed to succeed him Lord Elgin, the son of the Governor-General of 1862–3.

CHAPTER XI

MEASURES OF SOCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM, 1885-92. THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

THE events of Lord Dufferin's and Lord Lansdowne's Viceroyalties which most vividly struck the popular imagination have been described in the preceding chapters. It will be convenient here to deal with certain measures of social and political reform, rather repellent in detail but of great intrinsic importance, which were passed about this time. Some of them were initiated by Lord Ripon, some were only carried to fulfilment by Lord Lansdowne, while others were inaugurated and completed under Lord Dufferin. So careful and deliberate is the working of the Indian legislature that few first-class measures in modern times can be classified as the work of any single administration. Questions settled by one Viceroy are often found on examination to have been raised, discussed, and partially solved by one or more of his predecessors.

In the field of social reform three great agrarian measures were passed in Lord Dufferin's Viceroyalty. The first of these was the Bengal Tenancy Bill of 1885, initiated and all but carried to completion by Lord Ripon, which further extended and amplified the provisions of the Bengal Rent Act of 1859. It gave the ryot greater security of tenure at judicial rents, put restrictions on the practice of indiscriminate eviction, and framed rules for the settlement on equitable principles of disputed questions between landowners and tenants. The government, indeed, in this Act

dared to interfere with the operation of free competition when such competition subjected a defenceless peasantry too rigorously to the will of the landlords. Opponents maintained that the new law was an infringement of the Permanent Settlement of 1793, and that the Indian government was failing to keep its pledged word with the zamindars. But the Viceroy's answer was that both this measure and its predecessor, the Act of 1859, were only rather belated attempts to carry out the supplementary reforms which Cornwallis himself had intended to introduce. Later followed an Act dealing with Oudh, the ground for which also had been prepared by Lord Ripon. It afforded increased security to the tenants-at-will not protected by Lord Lawrence's Act of 1868, and gave them, if ejected, compensation for any improvements they had made within the preceding thirty years. Finally, in 1887 a Bill on the same lines was passed to define and protect the rights of cultivators in the Punjab.

Two important Acts, one relating to the economic and the other to the moral welfare of the people, were passed in Lord Lansdowne's time. The first was a factory Act, which amended and amplified the measure of 1881. The hours of employment for women were limited to eleven *per diem*. The minimum age for children was raised from seven to nine years and the maximum from twelve to fourteen. They were only to be employed for seven hours, and that in the day-time. All workers in a factory of any age or sex were to have a weekly holiday. Secondly, the Age of Consent Act raised the limit within which protection was given to young girls from ten to twelve years. As in the case of Lord William Bentinck's abolition of *Sati*, the cry was raised that the government's action was an infringement of the clause in the queen's proclamation of 1858 promising that the religious scruples of the Indian people should be respected. But Lord Lansdowne refused to be

moved by such arguments, declaring that the pledges of the famous proclamation must be read with the reservation 'that in all cases where demands preferred in the name of religion would lead to practices inconsistent with individual safety and the public peace, and condemned by every system of law and morality in the world, it is religion and not morality which must give way'.

In 1885 the first session was held at Bombay of the Indian National Congress, an unofficial body of men representing the advanced party of Indian reformers. That party was the direct offspring of the higher education on western lines imparted by the Indian universities since the educational changes of 1854. It was nourished, as we have seen,[1] on the study of the Whig and Radical political philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The quick intelligence of the more advanced Indian races, especially that of the Bengalis, applied the lessons thus acquired to the conditions of their own existence with a relentless logic that sometimes proved disconcerting to their instructors. Their avowed aim was the establishment in India of that democratic and constitutional system which, as existing in western lands, they had been called upon to contemplate as the highest stage of political evolution. The Congress itself crystallized into a permanent form the demonstrations organized to do honour to Lord Ripon on his retirement. Its members professed loyalty and friendliness to British rule, but they pressed for the introduction into India of representative institutions and a larger share for men of their race in the executive and legislative councils of the state.

The full significance of the first meeting of the Indian National Congress has only been revealed in our own time. It was easy then to point out the anomalies of its position and to expose the extravagance of some of its claims; to

[1] See Part I, p. 304.

deny, for instance, even its right to the title 'National', on the ground that its members, as Lord Lytton in one sense truly said, 'really represent nothing but the social anomaly of their own position'. They were drawn at first almost entirely from the small section of Indians who spoke English and had acquired a western education. They had very little claim to speak for the great mass of their fellow countrymen, the dumb millions of agriculturists whose one absorbing interest is the wresting of a decent livelihood from the soil, who work out their destiny under the paternal care of British collectors, on the plains. Again the attempt of the Congress to clothe national ideals, which are often feudal and aristocratic in nature, with the drapery of democratic aspirations, produces an effect which is bizarre and incongruous in the extreme. For a long time its activities were looked upon with disfavour by the greater part of the Muhammadan community and the ruling chiefs. Yet undoubtedly some movement of this nature was sooner or later inevitable, and is indeed the logical result of some of the best tendencies of British rule in India. The Congress party in the past has done valuable work in directing attention to genuine grievances. Many of its leaders have been men of moderation, ability, and true patriotism, and from this time onward year by year it gradually extended its influence and sway over the minds of the educated Indian classes.

Lord Dufferin recognized that the aspirations of the party or, at any rate, the more moderate section of it, were natural enough. It was as yet impossible to set up in India any system of democratic government on the English pattern, but not impossible to accept the suggestion of the Conference for the widening of the basis of the legislative councils both of the Viceroy and of the subordinate governments. Already in 1886 a legislative council similar to that existing in the three great Presidencies had been

established in the North-west Provinces, now the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh; Lord Dufferin's suggestion, recalling that of Lord Lytton, was 'to give quickly and with a good will whatever it may be possible or desirable to accord; to announce that these concessions must be accepted as a final settlement of the Indian system for the next ten or fifteen years; and to forbid mass meetings and incendiary speechifying'. He declared indeed that he would feel it a relief if in settling administrative questions he 'could rely to a larger extent than at present upon the experience and counsels of Indian coadjutors'. Before he laid down his office his government suggested that new members, representing as far as possible different classes and interests, should be added to the legislative councils, that the Viceroy's council should annually discuss the budget submitted by the finance minister, and that the right of putting questions to the executive should be allowed to members of council as to the British House of Commons. This last reform, he declared, would both be a valuable concession to the reform party and give the government a recognized and constitutional means of justifying its policy. All these suggestions, with certain modifications in detail, were carried out in the time of his successor by Lord Cross's Indian Councils Act of 1892, which enlarged the legislative councils of the Indian governments. In the imperial council of the Viceroy the additional members were to be at least ten and at most sixteen, and not more than six were to be men holding official positions. The Act gave the Governor-General in Council the power to lay down conditions under which the members should be nominated so as to be representative of different classes and interests. In accordance with this provision it was decided to appoint ten non-official members of the four provincial legislatures, one selected by the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce while the remaining five were nominated by

the Governor-General. The provincial legislatures of Madras and Bombay were also enlarged by twenty members each, not more than nine of whom were to be official. The non-official members were nominated by municipalities, university senates, and various trading associations. Thus the representative, if not the elective, principle was cautiously introduced into the councils, though as yet both in the Supreme and in the Provincial legislatures an official majority was guaranteed. The functions as well as the constitutions of the councils were enlarged. Up to this time the Viceroy's council had only the right to discuss the government's financial policy when fresh taxation was imposed. Hereafter, as Lord Dufferin had suggested, the budget was to be laid each year before the council and every member rising in turn could discuss and criticize it. The right of interpellation, i. e. of questioning the executive officers as to their administrative acts, was also granted under much the same kind of restrictions that are imposed in the British House of Commons.

These reforms, though they did not satisfy the extreme wing of the advanced party, constituted a notable step forward in the direction, if not of Indian self-government, yet of Indian participation in the highest administrative functions. Henceforward men of Indian birth sat at the same council board as the Viceroy and the executive ministers. Though they could not outvote the official majority if it was solidly arrayed against them, on all questions where there was a difference of opinion they could often determine the issue, for they formed usually about a third of the total council. In any case they had the right of expressing their opinions; their views were listened to with deference, and it was incumbent upon the Viceroy and his lieutenants to meet their criticisms.

The permanent Civil Service also underwent reorganization at this period. We have already seen that the statutory

Civil Service set up in Lord Lytton's time had disappointed expectations.[1] The Public Service commission, which sat in 1886–7 under the presidency of Sir Charles Aitchison, exhaustively considered the whole question, and its recommendations were carried out in 1891. The statutory Civil Service was abolished. Henceforward the civilian officers of the government were divided into three classes—the Imperial Indian Civil Service, the Provincial, and the Subordinate Service. The first was still to be recruited in England, but was open to Indians who made the journey to England and sat for the examination in London. The other two services were recruited in India almost altogether from Indians. Admission to the Provincial service was to be made in one of three ways: by examination, nomination by the Provincial governments, and promotion from the subordinate service. The members of the Imperial Civil Service held the majority of the most important posts; executive, administrative, and judicial offices of lesser but still considerable importance were filled by the officers of the Provincial service. To the subordinate service were allotted positions of minor importance. In 1893 the government of India was embarrassed by a rather unexpected Resolution of the House of Commons in favour of holding simultaneous civil service examinations in England and India. The local governments in India, with the exception of Madras, reported unfavourably on the proposed change. The Resolution was not followed by an Act and so remained merely an expression of the academic and pious opinion of the legislature in one of its impulsively Liberal moods.

[1] *Supra*, p. 459.

CHAPTER XII

1894-95

FAMINE, PLAGUE, AND FRONTIER WARS. LORD ELGIN'S ADMINISTRATION

THE Viceroyalty of Lord Lansdowne to some extent closes an epoch. Under his rule the surface of the sea of Indian politics had been singularly unruffled. The only disturbing features were the steady fall in exchange and the cycle of deficits in the annual budgets—signs that the era of financial prosperity dating from Sir John Strachey's fiscal reforms was for the time at an end. India indeed was about to enter upon a period of toil and stress, of famine, plague, and harassing frontier wars—events which were destined to be followed by widespread social and political unrest, and ultimately by far-reaching constitutional changes. For two years Lord Elgin, Lord Lansdowne's successor, enjoyed comparative tranquillity, but at the end of that short respite he was confronted with difficulties which taxed every branch of the Indian administration. Lord Elgin was the head of an old and traditionally Liberal Scottish family. His reputation was that of a sound and cautious administrator, and it was unfortunate for him that he was called upon to deal with problems, which would have severely tried the ablest Governors-General, who have guided the destinies of India. Wisely, perhaps, he eschewed heroic measures, allowing himself for the most part to be ruled by the advice of his permanent officials. His administration came in for a full share of criticism, not all of it quite fair or generous. Some mistakes were made, some hesitation shown, and his grasp of the helm of state might perhaps have been at

times a little firmer and more confident, but at least he held on his course through very stormy seas and suffered no shipwreck.

The state of the finances first claimed attention. The closing of the Indian mints to the free coinage of silver failed, as we have shown, to have any immediate effect, and chiefly through the continued fall in exchange the new Viceroy was confronted in his first budget with the prospect of a serious deficit. Drastic measures were called for and the Indian government reluctantly decided to reimpose the old general duty of five per cent. on all imports, cotton goods alone being excluded. As to this exception a fierce controversy naturally arose. The duties were imposed for revenue alone, and though most economists admitted that they must necessarily have some slight protective effect, protection for Indian commodities was certainly not the motive for imposing them. It was argued with some force that the cotton spinners of Lancashire ought to put up with the same disability as all other British manufacturers, and though it might be logical to force upon India a general policy of free imposts, to except Manchester goods alone from a general revenue tariff was really to give them a kind of indirect protection. The truth of this was admitted by many Free Traders who would have strongly opposed the imposition of any duty on cotton goods when imports were generally free. At the end of the year the financial position was still so serious that cotton goods were included in the tariff, but as a corresponding countervailing excise duty was levied on the products of Indian mills, the Indian manufacturers, so far from being mollified, were the more exasperated. In 1896 after a long and heated controversy both the import and the excise duties were reduced from five, to three and a half, per cent. The perennial question of the interest of India *versus* the interest of Manchester was thus no nearer a permanent solution, but the monetary

problem for a time, at least, was settled. It is true, as already mentioned, that the value of the rupee continued to fall till 1895 when it reached its lowest point at one shilling and a penny, but after that year (whether through the continued closing of the mints, the restrictions on the import of silver, or more general causes, is still a matter of dispute) it gradually rose to the value of one shilling and fourpence, the point at which the government proposed to maintain it, by introducing a gold standard at the rate of fifteen rupees to the sovereign.

In 1895 an important military administrative reform came into operation which the slow-moving machine of the Indian government had been maturing since 1879, a period of sixteen years. The change had received the approval of many Governors-General, and the details were worked out between the home and the Indian authorities under Lord Dufferin and Lord Lansdowne. In the old system there had been three Presidential armies under three Commanders-in-Chief, and just as the Commander-in-Chief of Bengal had been a member of the Viceroy's council, the Commanders-in-Chief of Bombay and Madras had been members of the councils of the two subordinate Presidencies. Henceforward there was to be a Commander-in-Chief of the whole Indian army, and under him four Lieutenant-Generals for the forces in Bengal, Bombay, Madras, and the North-west Provinces with the Punjab. What appears at first sight to have been a mere adjustment of administrative detail has a further interest as being the belated recognition of the unification of India under the conquering and absorbing power of Great Britain. The 'three army' system was an anachronistic survival recalling the fact that in the past each of the three Presidency towns was an outpost of British dominion in the eastern world surrounded by belts of hostile territory. From these three settlements the waves of British conquest had flooded out across the

peninsula, till the territories of all the Presidencies were linked together. The Indian states that survived were encircled in the Pax Britannica, and Madras and Bombay now possessed no frontiers to defend, or hostile neighbours to overawe. Except for garrison and routine duty, troops in India were rarely needed except on the great arc of her continental boundary extending from the Baluchistan border to the eastern confines of Burma.

The year 1895 was also noteworthy for the report of the commission appointed by Act of Parliament in 1893 to inquire into the extent of opium consumption in India, its effects on the physique of the people, and the suggestion that the sale of the drug should be prohibited except for medicinal purposes. The preparation of opium in British India is a state monopoly, and a considerable revenue is derived from it. Government limits and regulates the cultivation of the poppy and maintains two factories at Ghazipur and Patna for the manufacture of the drug. The larger part of the product was exported to China, and the rest retained for Indian consumption. There had always been a party in England which strongly objected to this instance of state production as immoral, holding that the revenue derived from it should be sacrificed on ethical grounds, whatever the economic loss involved. They believed that the consumption of opium, whether by eating or smoking, was pernicious to health and degrading to the character, and considered that the Chinese in the 'opium war' of 1842 had been unrighteously coerced into allowing the importation of the drug against their will and in detriment to the best interests of their country. On the historical point the defenders of the government allege that when the Chinese in 1842 destroyed the opium chests they were actuated, not by any motive of preserving their countrymen from a degrading habit, but by a hatred of foreign trade and the erroneous economic belief that China was

being drained of bullion to pay for an excess of imports over exports. The argument is not perhaps very convincing, and it may be maintained with some plausibility that war is a rather severe penalty to impose upon a nation for an honestly held, though mistaken, theory of international trade. The apologists of the government were on stronger ground when they contended that in the Treaty of Tientsin of 1858 China without any coercion voluntarily permitted the importation of opium. The commission reported that there had been much exaggeration as to the evil effects of consumption. They compared indulgence in it to indulgence in alcohol in western countries; of both commodities a temperate use was unobjectionable, and total prohibition was no more reasonable in one case than in the other. They declared that it was for China to take action if she desired to prohibit the importation of the drug, that the state control really ensured a considerable restriction of cultivation, since poppy cultivation was only allowed in definite areas, that Indian opium was the best and purest form of the drug procurable, and that the Chinese, if deprived of it, would only use larger quantities of their own home-grown supply, which was of a very inferior quality. Finally, turning from the ethical to the economic standpoint, the commissioners declared that the Indian exchequer could not afford as yet to surrender the revenue from opium. The report seems plain common sense to men of moderate opinions. Neither opium smoking nor drunkenness will ever be stamped out by government regulation, and prohibition would inevitably be followed by illicit production and smuggling on an extensive scale. The promoters of the anti-opium agitation of course were not satisfied, and were destined to win a further victory for their cause. By arrangement with the Chinese government a gradual decrease of the export trade on a progressive scale was guaranteed to begin from January 1908.

In 1896 the two scourges of famine and plague devastated the land. India had been free from famine for nearly twenty years, and this was the first occasion on which the famine code of 1883 was put to the test. The rains were deficient in 1895, and in 1896 they almost completely failed. The United and Central Provinces, Berar, some districts of Bengal, Madras and Bombay, Rajputana and Upper Burma passed beneath the desolating shadow of scarcity and drought. There were three-quarters of a million deaths in British territory alone, and in the spring of 1897 4,000,000 people were receiving relief. The cost to the state, including necessary remissions of revenue, amounted to more than five and a half millions sterling. The most scientific and successful work in combating the famine was done in the United Provinces (then known as the North-west Provinces), while in the Central Provinces, partly owing to the great difficulty of administering relief to the aboriginal tribes of that region, the record was comparatively one of failure.

An event of even more sinister import than the failure of the monsoons was the notification at Bombay in August 1896 of the first case of bubonic plague. Less terrible in its immediate effects, its ravages were destined to be ultimately far more permanent and devastating. The worst famines rarely last into the second year, and the kindly forces of nature with their wonderful recuperating power soon restore to parched lands and stricken peoples fertility and abundant sustenance. The deadly virus of plague infection advances by insidious steps, strengthening month by month its deadly grip upon paralysed cities and provinces. In spite of every effort of science and human forethought the tale of its victims continues. For a time it seems to recede, and the curve of the death-rate falls for reasons that are often as inexplicable as those that govern its rise; but even as hopes are being formed that plague will be driven from the shores

of India, it begins once more to gain in intensity. Plague has now existed in India for twenty-two years, and at the present time (1918), though it appears to be waning, it still claims a considerable toll of victims every year. The history of this curse of humanity stretches far back into the past. It is supposed by some authorities to be the disease which appeared in Athens in 431 B.C., decimated the population of Attica crowded within the walls of the capital owing to the Peloponnesian war, slew in Pericles the greatest of Athenian statesmen, and was described with relentless realism and poignant art by the pen of Thucydides. It was the Black Death of the Middle Ages which passed westward across Europe in 1346–9, swept away at the most modest computation one-third of the population of England, revolutionized the social and economic aspect of society, and put an end to the condition of villeinage. It appeared again as the Great Plague of London in 1665, drove the 'Committees' of the Caroline East India Company from Leadenhall Street, caused Parliament and the Court to fly in terror from London to Oxford, and taxed all the pathos and descriptive power of Defoe. In every case the death-laden path of the scourge ran from East to West. After each expansive outbreak of destructive power it gradually and sullenly receded to its pestilential fastnesses in Asia, lingering longest in the Balkans and the coasts of Asia Minor where the border lands of two continents meet under the suzerainty of the Turk.

In certain crowded festering centres of the Chinese empire the plague never died out, though its explosive and travelling energy seemed to be exhausted. But in the closing years of the nineteenth century, after a long period of brooding quiescence in remote parts of Asia, it once more became charged with a baneful activity. In 1877–8 it appeared for a time in Eastern Europe at Astrakhan in Russia. In the early nineties it spread slowly across China,

and, probably brought by infected rats on grain ships from Hong Kong, it broke out in Bombay in the autumn of 1896, rapidly spreading among the crowded and squalid tenement houses of the native quarter, and causing an exodus of the panic-stricken population. By February 1897 it was estimated that 400,000 of the inhabitants had fled from the city. The government were at once faced with a difficult and delicate problem—the extent to which it was possible in view of Indian prejudices and convictions to put into force the scientific counsels of perfection pressed upon them by their medical advisers. The doctors drew up plans for house-to-house visitation, disinfection, isolation hospitals, segregation camps, and inoculation, all of which were intensely distasteful to the Indian population with their caste regulations and their jealousy of any infringement of privacy in their home life. In 1897 an Indian civilian and a military officer who had been engaged on plague work were assassinated at Poona. In March 1898 serious riots broke out in Bombay. The vernacular press had conducted an unscrupulous campaign against the Indian government's precautionary measures, and as a result the law against seditious publications was made more effective—an expedient which, however necessary, only intensified popular feeling. Though the opposition to plague restrictions was based on ignorance and panic, it was for the most part sincere and genuine enough. In 1898 this fact was recognized by the government of India, and the more stringent rules recommended by the medical experts were abandoned for milder methods which, since they respected the prejudices of the people, actually produced better results. All hope of stamping out the plague promptly had perforce to be given up, and the efforts of the authorities were henceforward directed towards keeping it under control.

On the frontier the storm centre was the north-west. The history of our first relations with Chitral has already been

related in Chapter XI. By the Durand agreement of 1893 that little hill state, with its capital of the same name, had been included in the British sphere of influence. The Indian government had long been eager to exert some control over the country, especially its external relations. A British agency was now established at Gilgit, in Kashmir territory, with an outpost in Chitral at Mastuj, whence the British political officer from time to time visited the capital. In January 1895 the Mehtar, or ruler, of Chitral was assassinated at the instigation of Sher Afzal, an ex-Mehtar, and Umra Khan, the ruler of Jhandol. When the revolution took place Dr. (afterwards Sir George) Robertson, the British agent at Gilgit, proceeded to Chitral. The rebellious chiefs ordered him to retire to Mastuj and on his refusal besieged him in the capital. The Indian government sent Sir R. Low with a force of 15,000 men to fight his way northwards through the Malakand Pass and the country of the Swatis, who rose to support the Chitralis. Chitral, however, was ultimately relieved from the eastward by Colonel Kelly, who performed a notable military feat in marching from Gilgit to the beleaguered town through 220 miles of barren and hostile territory, crossing on his route the Shandu Pass, more than 12,000 feet above sea level. The garrison of about 500 men at the time of their relief had held out gallantly for forty-six days. Although Lord Elgin advised the retention of Chitral, the Liberal government of Lord Rosebery considered with some reason that, apart from our own interests, we had had very little justification for interfering in the internal troubles of the state, and they therefore decided on the evacuation of the country. Before this resolve could be carried out, the Liberal ministry fell from power and the Unionist government of Lord Salisbury reversed their decision and authorized the construction of a military road from Chitral to the British frontier with garrisons to protect it.

Over the reversal of the policy of evacuation and the building of the famous road a fierce controversy arose in England, and when the widespread movement on the north-west frontier of India began in 1897 the Liberal party were naturally inclined to attribute the trouble amongst the tribes largely to the retention of Chitral. So far they were acting entirely within their rights; there was a good deal of truth in their statement as to the fact, and their own policy of withdrawal received the warm support of many civil and military officers. But the whole development of the controversy affords a good illustration of the manner in which the violence of party may distort and embitter an imperial problem. In 1897 Mr. Morley and Mr. Asquith spoilt a good case by declaring that Lord Salisbury's government had been guilty of 'a breach of faith'. They based this accusation on the ground that it had been decided to retain Chitral in spite of the fact that Sir R. Low, when advancing through the country in 1895, had issued a proclamation to the tribesmen that no permanent occupation of their territory was intended. The government's reply was that by opposing Low's advance the Swatis had rejected the offer contained in the proclamation, and that they and the other tribal leaders had afterwards voluntarily entered into friendly arrangements to make and guard the road. But the most conclusive answer to the charge of bad faith was made by Lord George Hamilton, the new Secretary of State for India, who was able to show that the late Liberal government itself, when Lord Elgin suggested the policy of retention, dealt with the question from first to last as a matter of expediency, and never, in public dispatches at any rate, mooted the point that to accept the Viceroy's proposal would have been to violate a pledge. Sir Henry Fowler, the Secretary of State in the late administration, was obviously embarrassed by the fact that the zeal of his colleagues had so far outrun their discretion, and he did his best to

restate their charge in more moderate language, with the result that the controversy came to a rather lame conclusion.

It can hardly indeed be doubted that our incursion into Chitral politics was one of the reasons that produced the serious risings over the whole extent of tribal territory in 1897, but there were many other contributary causes. The tribesmen had always been intensely jealous of their independence, and they looked with growing alarm upon some of the manifestations of the Forward policy of the preceding decade—the construction of roads and railways up to the limits of their territory and the gradual but persistent pushing forwards of British outposts. The delimitation by British officers of the boundary line between their territory and Afghanistan almost inevitably suggested to their suspicious minds that the same line was ultimately intended to be the northern frontier of British India; nor would it be fair to disguise the fact that an extreme minority of the advocates of the Forward policy did in fact desire such a consummation. The mad Mullahs, or fanatical priests of Islam, were for ever preaching in fiery language a crusade against the infidel Christian power that was threatening to absorb all independent Muhammadan territory. Abdur Rahman himself had recently issued a theoretical treatise on the *jehad* or holy war against unbelievers as enjoined in the Koran. Popular platforms in England at this time abounded in rhetorical abuse of the Sultan of Turkey, the head of the Muhammadan faith, for his treatment of the Armenians—abuse which, however well deserved, roused to fury much latent anti-Christian feeling.

The north-west frontier war broke out in June 1897 with a treacherous attack on a political agent and his escort in the Tochi valley. In July the people of Swat launched fierce onslaughts on the British fortified posts at Chakdara and the Malakand, which had been maintained since the

Chitral expedition. In August the Mohmands who dwelt north of the Kabul river raided up to the outskirts of Peshawar. Risings followed of the Afridis south of the river and the Orakzais in the neighbourhood of the Khyber Pass. The Afridis besieged the fortified stations on the Samana Ridge, one of which made an heroic defence, the Sikh garrison dying to a man at their post. The British fortresses in the Khyber at Ali-Masjid and Landi Kotal were held for a time by loyal Afridi tribal levies, but they were fiercely attacked and driven out by their countrymen.

It was now clear that the whole Pathan country was seething with rebellion and formidable forces were massed to crush the movement. There were two distinct campaigns. The first was directed against the Mohmands. The Malakand field force under Sir Bindon Blood relieved Chakdara in August and carried the war into their territory in September. After fierce fighting in a difficult and barren country the Mohmands made their submission in January 1898. The second campaign was in the Tirah valley south-west of Peshawar, the country of the Afridis, hitherto practically unexplored by Europeans. Sir William Lockhart was in command of a force of about 35,000. In October the heights of Dargai were brilliantly stormed with the loss of 199 killed and wounded. The whole valley was traversed and the fortified villages were destroyed, but the Afridis fought with great courage and skill, everywhere waging a perpetual guerrilla warfare, harassing the line of march, and cutting off all stragglers. We suffered some of our severest losses in desperate rearguard actions when the troops were being withdrawn from the country by two routes in December 1897. But the enemy had learnt their lesson, and when threatened with another invasion in the spring of 1898 they made submission, paid the fines imposed upon them, and surrendered their arms. A notable feature of these cam-

paigns was that Imperial service troops under Indian princes fought side by side with the British forces. Our losses in the war were about 300 killed and 900 wounded. The military operations were the severest test to which the British army in India had been subjected since the Mutiny, not even excepting the Afghan war of 1878.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF LORD CURZON IN THE NORTH-WEST, AFGHANISTAN, AND PERSIA

In January 1899 Lord Elgin was succeeded by Lord Scarsdale's eldest son, the Hon. George Nathaniel Curzon,[1] who had made so promising a start in Parliamentary and Ministerial life in England that some surprise was expressed at his leaving Westminster. He was now in his fortieth year and had served in Lord Salisbury's government as Under-Secretary both for India and for Foreign Affairs. At his own request he was elevated to an Irish peerage instead of one of the United Kingdom, in order that on his retirement, if he desired it, he might not be debarred from continuing his career in the House of Commons. It had been for long the dream of Lord Curzon's life that he might one day hold the great position to which he was now appointed, and he had trained and prepared himself for it by wide and frequent travel in both the nearer and the further East. He had already sailed four times to India, and had visited Ceylon, Afghanistan, China, Persia, Turkestan, Japan, and Korea. He had enjoyed personal intercourse with the rulers of the last four countries. He had given to the world three important books on Asian questions. No Viceroy not an ex-civil servant ever took up his office with so full and extensive a knowledge of the problems to be faced in India.

It is no reflection on the able and sound administrators

[1] For the chapter on Lord Curzon the author desires to acknowledge his obligations to that brilliant and fascinating book *India under Curzon and After*, by Mr. Lovat Fraser, London, 1911.

who preceded and followed him, to say that Lord Curzon's viceroyalty was destined to stand out with special prominence. For good or ill no Governor-General since Dalhousie so deeply impressed his personal mark upon the whole framework of Indian administration, or so widely attracted to himself and to Indian questions the attention of his fellow-countrymen. It is not meant by this that there were no reasonable grounds of dissent from some part of his policy or justification for criticism. Much of what he achieved has still to be tested by the supreme criterion of time, and this generation stands far too close to the events of his administration to pass anything like a final verdict, but even Lord Morley of Blackburn, who belongs to the very opposite school of political thought and tradition, has admitted that 'the old system (of Indian government) had never been worked with loftier and more benevolent purpose or with a more powerful arm than by the genius and indomitable labour of Lord Curzon'. Like all strong men Lord Curzon sometimes came into sharp collision with the wills of others. He challenged criticism and invited enmities. He was too outspoken and too honourably careless of consequences to be popular. Endowed himself with powers of work that seemed almost superhuman, he exacted toil in proportionate measure from his colleagues and subordinates. His vivid and ardent temperament sometimes made him advocate a good cause with unnecessary vehemence. His masterful nature was not altogether favourable to initiative and independence in others. His sense of humour was, perhaps, not so highly developed as his other great qualities. Undoubtedly he tried to do too much. He drove his reforming plough onward a little too rapidly, a little too relentlessly. As they breathlessly pursued his high conception of efficiency, men sometimes sighed for the deliberate restraint and wise tolerance of Viceroys like Lord Northbrook and Lord Dufferin. No statesman ever yet lacked an

opposition, and Lord Curzon had plenty of opponents; so that, what seemed to kindly critics to be an altogether admirable devotion to the duties of his high office, appeared to unfriendly and jaundiced observers as 'the bounding exuberance of a vain-glorious personality'. But when all the facts are reviewed, and when all possible deductions are made, Lord Curzon's viceroyalty must surely stand out as great and notable, great in the roll of the tasks actually achieved, great in the lofty sense of duty invariably displayed, in the exacting labours unremittingly fulfilled, and great in the stately and impressive eloquence which defended his policy before the bar of public opinion.

Lord Curzon's external policy was mainly concerned with the north-west frontier tribes, with Afghanistan, with Persia, and with Tibet. Of these problems the settlement of the tribal country in the north-west first claimed his attention. The Tirah campaign, as we have seen, had been concluded in the spring of 1898, but a year later, when Lord Curzon assumed office, about 10,000 troops were still quartered beyond the British boundary line in Chitral, the Tochi valley, Landi Kotal and the Khyber Pass. In Parliament Lord Curzon had ably defended Lord Elgin's policy in regard to Chitral and the construction of the famous road from that town to Peshawar, and he had generally been regarded as one of the ablest exponents of the forward school. But in India he clearly showed that he had little sympathy with its extreme advocates. It was, of course, no longer a matter of practical politics to evacuate Chitral, Quetta, and the posts already occupied, but short of that, Lord Curzon deliberately reversed the trend of frontier policy of recent years. Large numbers of British troops were gradually withdrawn from the Khyber Pass, the Kurram valley, Waziristan, and the tribal country generally, though isolated posts like the Malakand and Dargai just over the border were retained and fortified. Their place was taken

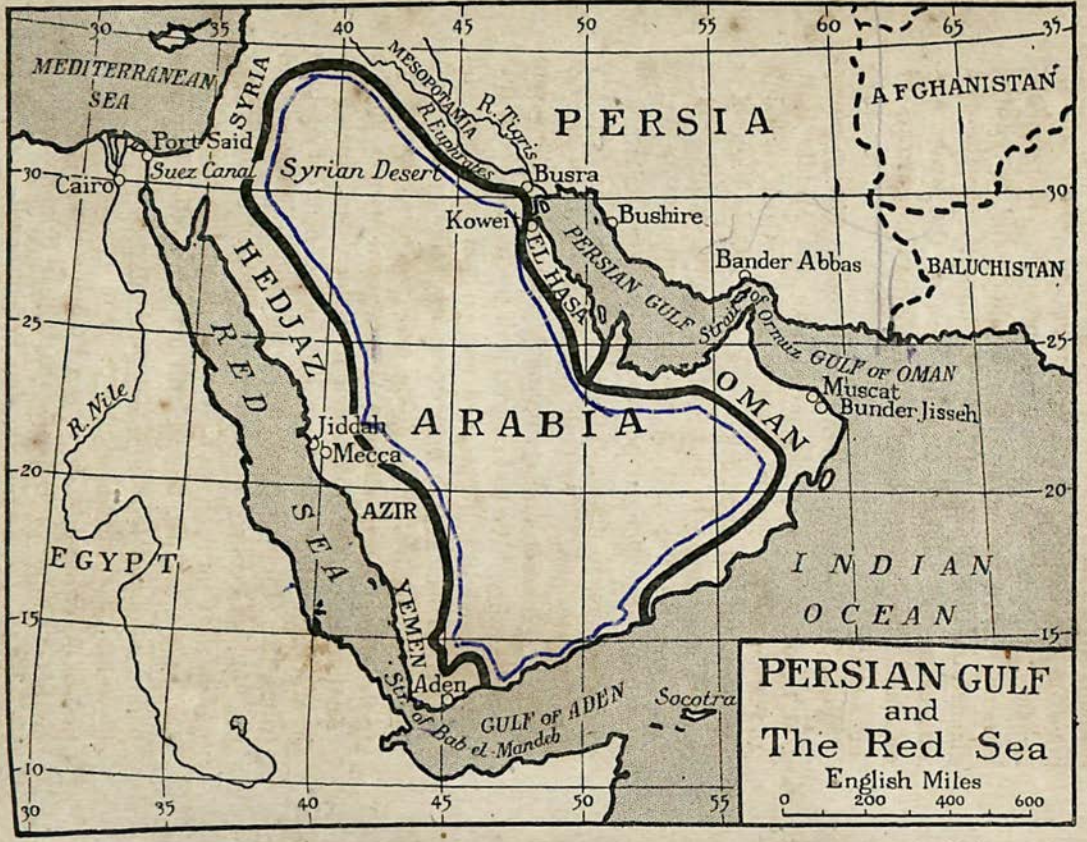
by tribal levies trained and commanded by British officers. Down to 1914, for instance, the whole of the Khyber Pass was held by the Afridis of the Khyber Rifles. Within our lines our forces were increased and concentrated; strategic railways were built up to Dargai, Jamrud, at the entrance to the Khyber Pass, and Thal, the gate of the Kurram valley. A determined attempt was made to regulate and limit the importation of arms and ammunition to the tribesmen, and generally speaking, the latter were taught that, while we would scrupulously respect their independence, we should not tolerate outrages upon our frontier. The best defence of this policy is the fact that, with the exception of the blockade of the Mahsud Waziris in 1901, the fierce conflicts of 1897–8 were followed by ten years of peace. 'If anybody', said Lord Curzon, in the House of Lords in 1908 after his retirement, 'had been disposed to doubt the success of the scheme of frontier policy which has now been in existence for ten years, his doubts must have been dispelled, and I hope that we shall now hear no more of the wild-cat schemes for advancing into tribal territories, annexing up to the border, and driving roads through the tribal country.'

Hitherto the north-west frontier districts had been subordinate to the lieutenant-governorship of the Punjab, and the government of India could only indirectly control them. This arrangement dated back to the time when the Punjab was itself regarded as a frontier province, and was administered by the famous school of district officers who were purposely left by the government a large amount of freedom and initiative. Their relations with the people were personal and intimate, and as long as their methods were justified by success, they suffered little interference from Calcutta or Simla. But, as the British boundary line shifted further to the north-west, most of the Punjab became as much subject to law and regulations as the old

settled provinces. Lord Lytton, as we have seen, had already suggested that the frontier districts should be placed under officers directly controlled by the supreme government, but the projected reform, though considered by Lord Elgin and Lord George Hamilton, had remained in abeyance. In 1901 Lord Curzon carried it through. The trans-Indus districts of the Punjab were joined with the political charges of the Malakand, the Khyber, the Kurram, Tochi, and Wana, to form a new North-West Frontier Province, with an area of 40,000 square miles, under a chief commissioner directly responsible to the government of India. At the same time, in order to avoid confusion the old North-West Provinces were renamed the 'United Provinces of Agra and Oudh'. The change, though now almost universally approved, was not effected without much friction and opposition at the time. Some of the Punjab officials were aggrieved at the curtailment of their powers, and were offended at Lord Curzon's strictures on the former frontier record of the Punjab government—strictures which, it may be confessed, were unnecessarily vigorous.

The peace secured along the north-west frontier did much to improve our relations with Abdur Rahman, which since the troubles of 1897–8 had inevitably been critical. The Amir, indeed, was in an extremely difficult position. Though he was accused by many Englishmen at the time of secretly fomenting the trouble from his side of the frontier, the charge was probably untrue. The tribesmen appealed to him, and the majority of his own turbulent subjects would have been only too pleased to plunge into the troubled waters. But Abdur Rahman succeeded, and it was no mean feat, in keeping them in hand. In a vigorous proclamation he ordered them to keep the peace, denied that the movement was a *jehad*, or holy war, and declared that when the right time for such a crusade occurred he would announce it and

put himself at their head. In 1900 the Amir published his autobiography, a work of great interest. His point of view was naturally different from our own, but the very complaints he makes against British policy testify to the value he placed upon our alliance. He asserts that the policy of the government of India in relation to his country has too often been inconsistent and vacillating. Great Britain should give her ally more material and moral support against Russian aggression, and should take him more into her confidence. He ought to be allowed to annex the territories of the tribesmen, and to form a triple alliance with the two great Muhammadan powers of Turkey and Persia. This able and sagacious ruler died in September 1901, and perhaps the greatest testimony to his power was the fact that, against all the precedents of Afghan history, his son Habibullah was allowed to succeed peaceably, and no internecine civil war broke out between the numerous sons of the late Amir. Our relations with Habibullah, at first, were hardly as cordial as they had been with his father. The Indian government regarded the treaty with Abdur Rahman as personal to that ruler only, and desired that it should now be renewed. The new Amir, however, argued that the agreement was one between the two countries and that a renewal was unnecessary. For some years intercourse almost ceased between Afghanistan and the Indian government, and Habibullah refrained from drawing his subsidy. No doubt he had internal difficulties of his own, and it is at any rate in his favour that he succeeded in holding back his unruly subjects from serious depredations across the frontier. Three years later (November 1904) when Lord Curzon was in England, before he embarked on his extended period of office, Lord Ampthill, the acting Viceroy, sent Sir Louis Dane on a mission to Kabul. The mission, which remained at the Afghan capital from December 12, 1904 to March 29, 1905, was so far successful that better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Port Said
Suez Canal
Syrian Desert
Busra
Cairo
Kowei
Bushire
EL HASA
PERSIAN GULF
Bander Abbas
BALUCHISTAN
Str. of Ormuz
GULF OF OMAN
HEDJAZ
RED
Muscat
Bunder Jisseh
R. Nile
Jiddah
Mecca
ARABIA
OMAN
AZIR
SEA
EGYPT
YEMEN
INDIAN
OCEAN
Aden
Str. of Bab el-Mandeb
GULF OF ADEN
Socotra
PERSIAN GULF
and
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relations were established with the Amir, but only at the price of concessions which, according to some critics, seriously impaired our credit and prestige. Habibullah certainly treated the envoy rather cavalierly and arrogantly claimed the title of 'His Majesty' for himself. In the end this claim was allowed, and his view of the treaty was accepted, whereupon he consented to draw the arrears of his subsidy.

Within the preceding twenty years Indian foreign policy had been increasingly concerned with the Middle East, and especially with the Persian Gulf. Great Britain's influence in that landlocked sea had always been of a unique character. It had steadily grown by prescriptive right, and till the end of the nineteenth-century it was practically unchallenged because, with a wise prevision, no definite claims in regard to it had ever been put forward by British statesmen. The Gulf was one of the main areas of British exploration and commercial enterprise in the seventeenth century. We had cleared it of the piratical craft that once infested it, had patrolled and policed its waters, and since 1853 had kept it open to vessels sailing under every flag. The need of maintaining over the seas the route to India caused us to claim a general control over all the coastline eastwards from Aden to Baluchistan, though we have not questioned the sovereignty of independent Arabian tribes, the Ottoman government, the Sultan of Oman and the Shah of Persia over the territories along the shore. So, too, in the Gulf itself we have never desired to acquire land on either seaboard, but we will allow no other European nation to obtain territorial stations there. In time, as was inevitable, our attitude attracted the rather resentful attention of other powers. In 1892 a French statesman declared in the Chamber of Deputies that Great Britain's claim to keep order by herself in the Persian Gulf, and to be sovereign arbiter of all disputes between Arabian, Persian,

and Turkish chiefs was 'exercised in a form European diplomacy had never recognized'. This statement, though it ignored actualities, had a certain literal truth about it, and for eleven years from this date France, Russia, Germany, and Turkey, by diplomatic activity in the Gulf and neighbouring waters appeared to be deliberately testing the validity of our unavowed claims. In 1898 the Sultan of Oman, in violation of a secret agreement with Great Britain of 1891 debarring him from alienating any part of his dominions to a European power, granted to the French a coaling-station at Bunder Jisseh, five miles south-east of Muscat, with the right to fortify it. In 1899 when this transaction became known, a small naval squadron was sent by Lord Curzon from Calcutta and, under threat of a bombardment of the Sultan's palace, the concession was revoked. In the negotiations that followed this drastic action, in London and Paris, the French accepted our view that a former treaty of 1862 precluded either country from acquiring any territory in the State of Oman. In 1900 a similiar attempt of Russia to obtain a coaling-station on the northern shore of the entrance to the Gulf was quietly frustrated. At the head of the Gulf the ruler of Koweit (whose title is the 'Sheik Mubarak'), a town possessing a fine harbour, was supported by us against Turkey's persistent efforts to undermine his independence, and in 1899 we entered into an agreement with him that he should make no concessions to any foreign power with the result—a contingency we had foreseen—that he politely refused Germany's request in 1900 to grant her a site for the terminus of the Berlin to Bagdad railway. The only result of these tentative essays upon our position was that we were driven to formulate our claims explicitly; in May 1903, Lord Lansdowne, the British Foreign Secretary, announced to the world that we should regard the establishment of a naval base or of a fortified post in the Persian

Gulf by any other power 'as a very grave menace to British interests which we should certainly resist with all the means at our disposal'.

This famous declaration was rendered necessary not only by the incidents which we have described but by a far greater world movement, the disintegration and dissolution of the Persian empire. Though Great Britain still held in her hands the greater part of the trade with southern Persia, her influence in the country as a whole had in recent years steadily and inevitably declined. The appointment of Sir Henry Drummond Wolff as minister to Teheran in 1887 did a good deal to restore our waning prestige, but in the northern province of the Persian empire we naturally did not, and could not, compete with Russia. Since the downfall of the Turcomans, of Khiva, and Bokhara, the Russian frontier for about a thousand miles has marched with that of Persia. The construction of the Transcaspian railway, and the development of navigation on the Volga had, up to the outbreak of the European War of 1914, diverted most of the commerce of northern and central Persia into Russian hands. But Russian commercial policy at this time was still dominated by ideas of monopoly and restriction. The construction of railways in Persian territory was forbidden, and other measures for the improvement of the country were discouraged. Politically, as well as commercially, northern Persia tended to pass more and more under Russian control. The northern frontier was ill-defined and encroachment upon it in one form or another was easy. Teheran the capital was within a hundred miles of the Russian frontier, and the most formidable—perhaps the only formidable—force in the Persian army consisted of Persian Cossacks trained and commanded by Russian officers. There could have been little doubt at the time that but for British influence in southern Persia, the whole empire of the Shah would soon have been absorbed into

the colossal dominions of the Tsar. Lord Curzon had for many years urged that attempts should be made to extend and develop that influence. His visit to the Gulf in 1903 —the sequel to Lord Lansdowne's famous pronouncement in the same year—the establishment of consulates in the ports and the internal trading centres, the Seistan mission of 1903–5 which, under Sir Henry McMahon, completed the work of Sir Frederic Goldsmith's boundary delimitation of 1872, and the projection of the Quetta to Nushki railway, with a view to opening up a trade route to Seistan, did much to further these projects. Lord Curzon's policy, which was also that of the Cabinet at home, has been attacked as too provocative, but in view of our long and unique services in keeping the peace in the Gulf, in surveying, lighting, buoying, and patrolling these pirate-infested waters the criticism is unreasonable. Lord Curzon found that there was a danger of our prestige as paramount power, which, even if unrecognized in the formal diplomacy of Europe, had been hallowed by long prescriptive right, crumbling away almost unnoticed amid the multiplicity of our imperial interests and distractions. His prompt yet carefully considered action repelled the insidious attempts of other powers to insinuate claims that would in the future have been embarrassing. He quietly but unmistakably proclaimed our intentions to the world, and on the shores of the Gulf itself displayed plain evidence to the nations dwelling there that the naval power of Great Britain extended even to their torrid, remote, and secluded waters its protecting and overshadowing arm.

CHAPTER XIV

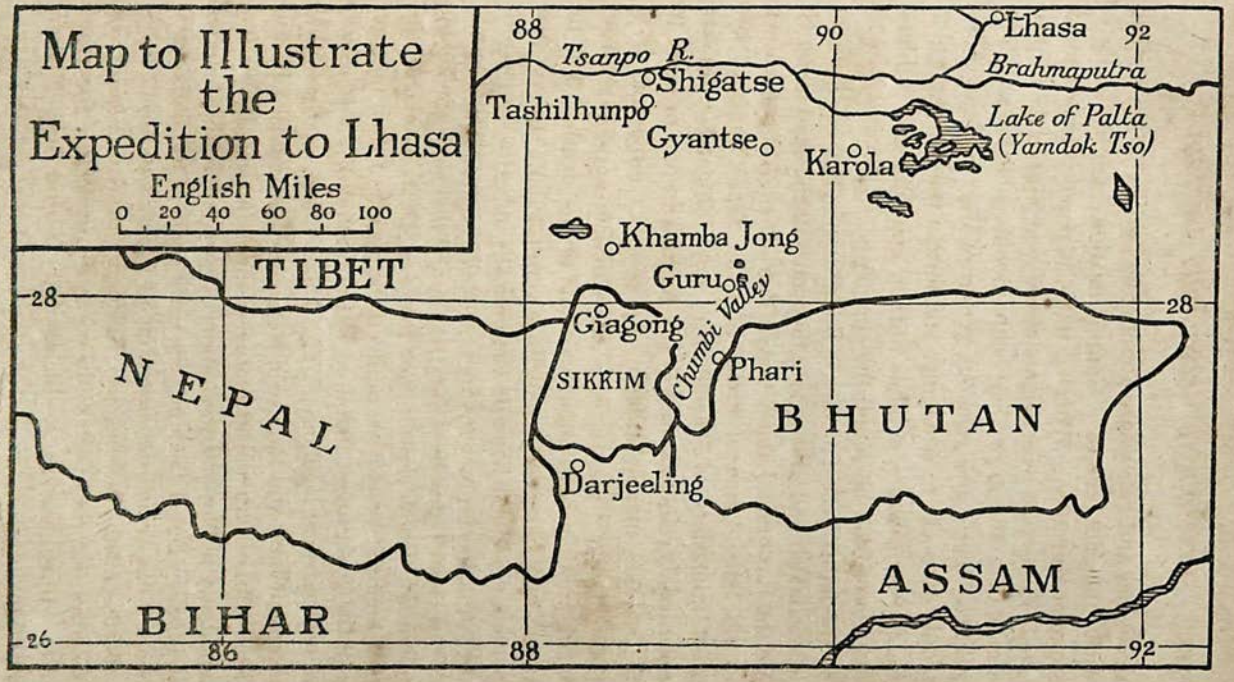
THE EXPEDITION TO TIBET. 1904

LORD CURZON'S policy in relation to the north-western frontier, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf, as we have seen, merits high praise, and the results achieved fully justified the line of action which he adopted. His treatment of the Tibetan problem is far more open to criticism, and the outcome of his activity in that quarter cannot be regarded as entirely satisfactory.

The central Asian tableland of Tibet stretches northward from the Himalayas; its western and southern frontier of about 1,000 miles marching with Kashmir, the Punjab, Garhwal, the United Provinces, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Eastern Bengal, and Upper Burma. It is bounded on the East by the Chinese empire and on the north by Eastern Turkestan. With an area in square mileage about equal to the combined territories of France and Germany it has a population of probably less than half that of London. The mean altitude of Tibet is far greater than that of any considerable country in the world. Lhasa, the capital, stands 12,900 feet above sea level. The town of Phari is built at a height of 15,000 feet—only about 800 feet lower than the summit of Mont Blanc. During Younghusband's expedition military operations at the Karo La were conducted at the stupendous elevation of between 18,000 and 19,000 feet. The vast Tibetan plateau sinking in places into shallow cup-like depressions and narrow valleys heaves up its crest in mountain ridges of 24,000 to 25,000 feet. A great part of the country is treeless waste covered with glaciers and eternal snows, and swept by bitter dust-laden winds, but the

declivities and valleys are abundantly fertile and are clothed with luxuriant crops. Communications are naturally of supreme difficulty. Wheeled traffic is practically unknown. Trade routes pass over heights where men faint in the rarified atmosphere and grow dizzy with mountain sickness. The political, social, and religious genius of the people of Tibet sedulously seeks to strengthen still further the barriers which the forces of nature, sublime in their grandeur and ruthlessness, have built up round the country.

The faith of the Tibetans is Buddhism. The government is a monkish and aristocratic theocracy, at the head of which are the two great Lamas, that is Pontiffs or Abbots, known as the Dalai Lama of Lhasa and the Tashi Lama of the great monastery of Tashilhunpo near Shigatse, who are regarded as reincarnations of the Buddha in one or more of his various manifestations. As soon as either of these pontiffs dies, a successor is immediately appointed from infant children born about the time of his death. Till he comes of age, regency councils govern for him. In spiritual matters the Tashi Lama is theoretically superior, but political power has for many years practically centred in the hands of the Dalai Lama or rather the council that rules during his minority; it is a sinister fact that few Dalai Lamas in the past hundred years have outlived the period of their nonage, and the government therefore has consisted of a succession of ecclesiastical regencies. The Dalai Lama, or those that represent him, and the executive council are advised by the Tsong-du, or national assembly, mainly controlled by a few hereditary nobles and the abbots of three great monasteries at Lhasa. But Tibet since the early years of the eighteenth century has owned the suzerainty of China, and two Chinese officials called Ambans, i.e. Residents or Ambassadors or Viceroys (for they partake in some degree of the functions of all three) reside at Lhasa and control the Tibetan government.


Map to Illustrate the Expedition to Lhasa
English Miles
0 20 40 60 80 100
88
90
92
Lhasa
Tsanpo R.
Brahmaputra
Shigatse
Tashilhunpo
Gyantse
Karola
Lake of Palta (Yamdok Tso)
Khamba Jong
Guru
Chumbi Valley
TIBET
28
Giagong
SIKKIM
Phari
NEPAL
BHUTAN
Darjeeling
ASSAM
BIHAR
26
86
88
92

Though the country is undeveloped, entirely uninfluenced by western ideas of progress, and, in the words of Captain O'Connor who accompanied the expedition, 'oppressed by the most monstrous growth of monasticism and priestcraft which the world has ever seen', it has, from the point of view of the inhabitants many redeeming features. The same observer records the fact that in spite of the arbitrary rule of the nobles and officials the country on the whole is well governed and the people well treated. 'They live simply and happily enough under a sort of patriarchal sway.' Though the monasteries lie everywhere like an incubus on the land, and drain away the resources of the soil, the fertility of the valleys in the comparatively small portion of Tibet which came under Captain O'Connor's observation, is such that 'the agriculturist has an easy time and little anxiety . . . the standard of comfort amongst the very poorest is high and indeed luxurious as compared with that of an Irish cottar'.

The history of British relations with Tibet dates back to 1774–5 when Warren Hastings sent a young and talented writer of the East India Company named George Bogle to visit the Tashi Lama of that period. He was kindly received and his report of his journey forms a valuable early source for our knowledge of Tibet. A second envoy, Samuel Turner, was dispatched in 1783 but found a colder welcome and less inclination on the part of the rulers of Tibet to open up trade with India. In 1811–12 Manning, an English free lance, actually succeeded in penetrating to Lhasa and visiting the child Dalai Lama of those days. In 1885–6, as we have seen, the consent of the Chinese was reluctantly given for a British commercial mission to Tibet, but in the end our prospects in that country were sacrificed to obtain the consent of the Chinese government to the annexation of Burma. In 1887 the Tibetans invaded the territory of the little protected state of Sikkim but were driven out with loss

by General Graham the next year. In 1890 a convention was concluded between Great Britain and China which settled the Sikkim-Tibet boundary and appointed joint commissioners, who were to discuss the possibility of providing increased facilities for trade, and to settle the question of pasturage on the frontier, both the Tibetans and the people of Sikkim being accustomed at certain seasons of the year to drive their cattle over their neighbours' boundary. By 1893 the Commissioners entered into a more definite agreement and a trade mart was established at Yatung just over the Tibet-Sikkim frontier. But practically no real trade or intercourse resulted. The truth was, as a British frontier officer declared, that 'neither the Chinese nor the Tibetan rulers will ever assent to free intercourse with India except through fear of something which they may regard as a greater calamity'. In maintaining their isolation both parties made effective play with the curious dualism of the government. The Chinese politely regretted that the Tibetans, owing to 'their doltish feelings', refused to welcome British intercourse, the Tibetans declared they could do nothing without the authority of the Chinese who, so they averred, had even failed to inform them that a convention had been concluded.

Things remained for some time in this unsatisfactory state, and just about the time of Lord Curzon's accession to office two new conditions in the political aspect of Tibet made their appearance. In the first place, the control of the Ambans over the government was sensibly weakening; the Tibetans showed a strong desire to free themselves from Chinese sovereignty and to welcome the influence of Russia as a counterpoise. Secondly, the Dalai Lama unlike most of his predecessors had outlived the period of his minority, overthrown the regency government by a *coup d'état*, and had revealed himself as a ruler with considerable personal force, a strong will and headlong disposition. He was greatly influenced by a remarkable man who had risen to

a high position in the administration of Tibet, Dorjieff, a Mongolian Buriat, and by birth a Russian subject. This man had been sent from Lhasa in 1898 to Russia to collect contributions for religious purposes from the numerous Buddhist subjects of the Tsar. He returned to Russia more than once within the next few years, and in 1900 and 1901 was received in audience by the Emperor. The Russian press hailed these events as heralding the spread of their country's influence in Tibet. It is likely enough that the initiative in this *rapprochement* came originally rather from Tibet than Russia. The Russian Foreign Minister assured the British ambassador in St. Petersburg that the visits of Dorjieff had no political significance, and certainly it would have been difficult for the Tsar to refuse to receive an envoy coming ostensibly on a religious mission. But the Indian government grew uneasy. They believed that Dorjieff, whatever the original purpose of his journeys, would be used to promote political aims, and would end by becoming practically a Russian agent in Tibet. As a matter of fact it appears that the Dalai Lama himself was the main convert to the new Russianizing policy. Dorjieff seems to have persuaded him that to fling off the onerous suzerainty of China it would be necessary to enter into closer relations with some other strong empire; the tremendous yet far distant might of Russia with her great number of Buddhist subjects was preferable to the power of Great Britain established so near the southern gates of Tibet, whose emissaries had long been endeavouring to penetrate the country for commercial purposes. The Tsong-du opposed the policy of the Lama, and, according to one theory the latter deliberately provoked aggression with India to force the hands of the national council and drive them into an agreement with Russia.

Lord Curzon eagerly pressed upon the home government the sending of a mission to Tibet. Complaints were to be made that the Tibetans had encroached upon the Sikkim

frontier, established a 'customs post at Giagong, thrown down certain boundary pillars and walled off the only road leading from Tibet to Yatung. These detailed grievances were to be supported by the more general statement that the isolation of the Tibetan government 'is not compatible, either with proximity to the territories of a great civilized power at whose hands the Tibetan government enjoys the fullest opportunities both for intercourse and trade, or with due respect for the treaty stipulations into which the Chinese government has entered on its behalf'. But the alleged reasons for the mission were flimsy, and it is certain that nothing would ever have been heard of them but for the recent visits of Dorjieff to Russia.

The home government was not in favour of any advance into Tibet. They pointed out that the country was politically subordinate to China, and that therefore the only proper course was to put pressure upon the authorities in Peking to bring the Tibetans to reason. Accordingly, in 1902, upon a report that an agreement had been concluded between Russia and China concerning Tibet, Lord Lansdowne informed the Russian ambassador that Lhasa was within a comparatively short distance of the northern frontier of India, while it was 1,000 miles distant from the Asiatic empire of Russia. We were more closely interested than Russia in Tibet and 'it followed that, should there be any display of Russian activity in that country, we should be obliged to reply by a display of activity not only equivalent to, but exceeding that made by Russia'. The British Minister at Peking had already informed the Chinese government that, should any agreement affecting the political status of Tibet be entered into by China with another power, the British government would be compelled to take steps for the protection of British interests. But Lord Curzon still believed in the existence of an agreement, if not a treaty, between St. Petersburg and Lhasa, and urged the home

government to send a mission direct to Tibet. The Chinese suzerainty was a 'political affectation', and the diplomatic use made by the two countries of the dualism of the government was a 'solemn farce' which 'has been enacted with a frequency that seems never to deprive it of its attractions or its power to impose'. In the view of Lord Curzon and his supporters England could not afford to see Russia allied with the Tibetans and controlling their policy. No Russian invasion of India through Tibet was indeed possible, but Russia's career of conquest and absorption in Asia was then at its zenith, and her presence in Tibet would have ruined British prestige in the East. The Secretary of State, however, declaring that the dispatch of an expedition to Tibet while Great Britain and Russia were discussing matters would be most unsuitable, imposed delay. Meanwhile, the Russian ambassador assured the home government that there was no convention about Tibet nor any Russian agent in that country, though the Russians regarded Tibet as forming part of the Chinese empire, in the integrity of which country they took an interest.

The whole situation was complicated and difficult. We have the Indian government pressing a forward policy on the Cabinet; the Cabinet endeavouring to restrain the eagerness of a masterful Viceroy and anxious not to offend the susceptibilities of Russia; the British Minister at Peking trying to put pressure on the Chinese government; the Chinese, hating our interference altogether, unable to coerce the Tibetans and anxious to conceal their inability to do so from the British government; and finally Russia protesting that she had no political designs, but obviously uneasy at the prospect of British intervention in Tibet.

Lord Curzon next proposed that negotiations should be opened with China and Tibet at Khamba Jong, a place fifteen miles north of the Sikkim frontier, to impress upon both those governments the need of fulfilling their treaty obliga-

tions, and that if envoys did not appear there, the British commissioners should move forward to Shigatse or Gyantse. The home government, most weakly from their own point of view, allowed themselves to be squeezed. They reluctantly sanctioned the advance of a mission under Colonel (now Sir) F. E. Younghusband to Khamba Jong, and though they declined to accept Lord Curzon's proposal that we should insist on having a British agent at Gyantse or Lhasa, they had in fact embarked upon a course of operations which under the pressure of further demands was to lead them step by step to the occupation of Lhasa itself.

Colonel Younghusband reached Khamba Jong in July, but though the Chinese officials made their appearance, the Tibetans refused to come to a conference unless the mission should retire to the frontier. Colonel Younghusband himself admits that there was some force in their argument that the discussion should have taken place on, and not within, the Tibetan boundary, and that it would have been reasonable for us to assent to their demand. It certainly seems difficult to contest this, and Colonel Younghusband's own reason against doing as the Tibetans requested is the purely arbitrary statement, which events might or might not have proved true, that 'such negotiations would not in fact have led to any result'. This could only be proved by the issue, and we should at least have attempted to negotiate without first crossing the boundary line. There ensued a long deadlock, during which the Tibetans began to mass troops in the neighbourhood of Khamba Jong. The home government, on November 6, after pressure from the Indian authorities, sanctioned an advance to Gyantse on the understanding that as soon as reparation should be obtained a withdrawal should be effected. This decision was followed by a prompt protest from the Russian ambassador to Lord Lansdowne, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, a protest which, in view of repeated British assurances on the subject of Tibet

in the past, could certainly not be regarded as unnatural. Lord Lansdowne, however, countered the Russian objections by declaring that the British government had shown extraordinary self-restraint and avowing his belief that under similar provocation the Russians would long ago have been in Lhasa; at the same time he gave an assurance that Tibetan territory should neither be annexed nor permanently occupied.

The advance to Gyantse began in March 1904, and on the last day of the month came the collision with the miserably-armed and badly-led Tibetan troops at Guru, which inevitably presented such a pitiful aspect to the world, and caused a great outbreak of indignation in England among the opponents of Lord Curzon's policy. The Tibetans had ranged themselves across the path of the expedition, and refused to give way when ordered to do so. A few rounds from the British modern weapons of precision left 700 dead and wounded on the field, while only a few casualties, none of them fatal, were sustained by our troops. Gyantse was reached on April 11, but there, too, the Dalai Lama refused to negotiate, and the Cabinet now authorized a further march on Lhasa. More fighting was found to be necessary. An advance guard brilliantly defeated the Tibetans, who occupied a strong position in tremendous altitudes amid eternal snows at the Karo La pass, and a surprise attack on the mission camp in the rear on May 5 was beaten off. The Dalai Lama, now thoroughly alarmed, sent mission after mission to meet the British force with offers to negotiate, but Younghusband sternly refused to enter into *pourparlers* till he reached Lhasa. On August 3 the expedition entered the holy and mysterious city, the goal of so many vain endeavours in the past, marching through the famous gateway and looking up with wonder at the glittering Potala Palace of the Lamas raised high above the rest of the town on its escarpment of solid rock, with its

tier upon tier of storied windows and golden roofs flashing in the sunlight. Three weeks before, the Dalai Lama, bitterly disappointed that no help was forthcoming from Russia, and convinced at last that nothing could stay the relentless advance of the men he had despised and flouted, had fled from his capital.

Younghusband now entered into negotiations with the Regent to whom the Dalai Lama before his flight had delegated his powers. The Chinese Resident proved courteous and obliging, in fact too much so for the taste of his government, which afterwards degraded him for what they regarded as excessive compliance to the mission. The Tonga Penlop (or Prime Minister) of Bhutan and the Nepal representative, who were present in Lhasa, gave the British valuable help, and did much to persuade the Regent to conclude the treaty. It was finally signed on September 7, and the expedition was able to start on its return journey sixteen days later. The treaty provided for the establishment of trade marts at Yatung, Gyantse, and Gartok, and the promotion and encouragement of commerce between India and Tibet. A British commercial agent was to be stationed at Gyantse, and he was empowered, if occasion demanded it, to proceed to Lhasa. The indemnity was fixed at 75 lakhs of rupees, and was to be paid off in annual instalments of one lakh. The Chumbi valley—that is, the wedge of Tibetan territory inserted between Bhutan and Sikkim—was to be occupied by British troops till the whole sum was paid off. Other provisions secured to Great Britain direct influence over the external policy of Tibet. No portion of Tibetan territory was to be alienated to any foreign power, nor was any agent of such power to be admitted into the country. No concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, no mining or other rights, were to be granted to any foreign state or to the subjects thereof. If such concessions were granted, similar powers would at once be demanded by the British government.

But, in concluding such terms, Younghusband had undoubtedly exceeded his powers. The Secretary of State had laid it down that the indemnity was not to exceed an amount which it was believed would be within the power of the Tibetans to pay by instalments spread over three years, though Younghusband 'was to be guided by circumstances in the matter'. No resident was to be demanded at Gyantse, Lhasa, or elsewhere. The home government considered the Tibetan question from the wider standpoint of imperial policy, and were bound by the pledge recently given to Russia that so long as no other power endeavoured to intervene in the affairs of Tibet, Great Britain would not attempt either to annex it or establish a protectorate over it, or in any way control its internal administration. Colonel Younghusband, viewing the problem from the narrower and simpler standpoint of Indian policy, allowed himself to deviate from these instructions. It is true that the reasoned dispatch setting forth the grounds of the home government's policy did not reach him till after the treaty was signed, when undoubtedly it would have been very difficult—if not impossible—to reopen negotiations, but the telegraphic instructions he had previously received were perfectly clear and definite. In spite of this he convinced himself by some curious reasoning that the discretion granted to him to be governed by circumstances would cover the prolongation of our hold over the Chumbi valley from three years to seventy-five, and justify the provision for an agent at Gyantse because his business was commercial and not political. The Government of India defended Younghusband's action as showing a 'fearlessness of responsibility which it would be a grave mistake to discourage in any of their agents'. The fact that they sympathized strongly with his point of view will perhaps explain this euphemistic synonym for disobedience to orders, for it must be confessed that Lord Curzon's government had not appeared hitherto to welcome

this kind of independence in their subordinates. On the other hand, the Secretary of State, Mr. St. John Brodrick, was very angry, as he had a right to be, at his instructions being disregarded. Clearly the proposed occupation of the Chumbi valley for seventy-five years would appear to the world a disingenuous evasion of the recent pledge to Russia. He therefore insisted on a revision of the treaty; the indemnity was reduced from 75 to 25 lakhs; it was agreed that after three annual instalments had been paid, provided the other terms of the treaty had been carried out, the Chumbi valley should be evacuated; finally, the condition which gave the British agent at Gyantse access to Lhasa was disallowed.

As regards the question of the justification for Lord Curzon's policy, it was noticed by Lord Rosebery in the House of Lords in 1904 that the situation of 1903 in regard to Tibet presented some rather sinister points of resemblance to that of 1878 in regard to Afghanistan. At both dates an independent state on our borders was showing a strong inclination to enter into relations with Russia. In both cases we had a very doubtful ethical or legal right to interfere, but in both too there existed a strong feeling, in many respects no doubt well justified, that our prestige would seriously suffer if we were excluded and Russia's representatives were admitted. Once more a vigorous forward policy was pressed on reluctant home authorities by the Indian government. Just as Lord Lytton desired the retention of a British agent at Cabul, so Lord Curzon was eager to keep a representative at Lhasa or Gyantse. There is even a somewhat striking resemblance between the vigorous and brilliantly-phrased dispatches of the two Viceroys. There was a tendency in 1903 as in 1878 to read into certain actions of our opponents more evidence of hostility than the facts warranted. For instance, it was stated that the Tibetans had usurped grazing rights on the Sikkim side of

the border, but it was afterwards found that they were balanced by similar rights which had been ceded to the Sikkimese, and that this mutual arrangement was the one most convenient for both parties.

To one school of thought it appeared that Lord Curzon 'by his policy of persistence crushed a cleverly veiled design', inimical to British imperial interests; to another he seemed to have embarked upon a course of unwarranted and disastrous interference with a weak and independent state. It is easy, of course, for the historian, in the illuminating wisdom that comes after the event, to point out that politically the results would have been more impressive if there had been no compromise between the two policies. Either Lord Curzon should have been allowed to pursue his path unhampered, or the Cabinet should have refused to sanction any interference at all. Within the next few years it seemed to some of those best acquainted with the East that 'China was the one power which has reaped solid advantages from the Tibet mission'. Chinese claims were developed into actual sovereignty. 'We have not extended our trade as we had hoped, and we have raised up for ourselves a new and disturbing situation on the north-east frontier of India.'

Whatever may be the political and ethical rights of the matter, the actual conception and conduct of the expedition were brilliantly successful. It has been rightly described as 'a triumph of organization and daring'; and indeed this sudden penetration of a little band of pioneers into the jealously-guarded seclusion and mysterious snow-clad solitudes of Tibet forms a fascinating episode in the unromantic annals of modern India.[1]

[1] The main authorities consulted for this chapter are: The Tibet Blue Book, i.e. *Papers relating to Tibet*, 1904, and *Further Papers relating to Tibet*, 1904 and 1905; *Lhasa and its Mysteries*, by L. A. Waddell, London, 1905; *Central Asia and Tibet*, by Sven Hedin, two vols., London, 1903; *Lhasa*, by Percival Landon, two vols., London, 1905; *India and Tibet*, by Sir Francis E. Younghusband, K.C.I.E., London, 1910; *The Unveiling of Lhasa*, by Edmund Candler.

CHAPTER XV

INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION UNDER LORD CURZON

In internal affairs Lord Curzon succeeded to a heritage of plague and famine. The drought of 1899–1900 was one of the most severe on record. It came before the country had fully recovered from the ravages of the visitation of 1896, and a simultaneous outbreak of cholera and malarial fever intensified the miseries of the famishing people. The scarcity extended over an area of 475,000 square miles with a population of 60 million souls. The provinces affected were the Punjab, Rajputana, Baroda, Bombay, the Central Provinces, Berar, Hyderabad, and Gujerat. One million people are said to have perished in British territory alone, and over six millions sterling were spent in relief. A commission presided over by Sir A. Macdonnell afterwards reported that the relief distributed was excessive, and that the excess was due to 'an imperfect enforcement of tests on relief works . . . a too ready admission to gratuitous relief and . . . a greater readiness on the people's part to accept relief owing to the demoralizing influences of the preceding famine'.

After 1900 India had for some time respite from severe famines. Plague, however, persisted and through the whole of Lord Curzon's viceroyalty increased in intensity. The most devoted efforts to combat its ravages proved in vain, and in the last year of his period of office the total number of deaths amounted to more than 900,000. In April 1900

serious riots occurred at Cawnpore, directed against the plague regulations. They were found on inquiry to have been deliberately planned, and seven of the ringleaders suffered the penalty of death.

At the end of the nineteenth century there was a marked improvement in the financial condition of India. The closing of the mints to the free coinage of silver began to show its effects, and the depression due to unstable exchange was relieved. From 1899 Indian budgets, instead of a dreary series of deficits, began to reveal handsome surpluses. It was therefore determined to carry to its logical conclusion the policy initiated in 1893. A commission at the India Office, appointed in May 1898, after an exhaustive examination of the question, reported in favour of making the British sovereign legal tender in India at the value of fifteen rupees, and an Act carrying the reform was passed in September 1899. Gold began to flow into India; the profits of the coinage of silver were set apart as a gold reserve fund, and by the time Lord Curzon laid down his office it amounted to about £9,000,000.

There are so many disturbing factors to be taken into account that monetary problems of this nature may not lightly be made the subject of confident assertion, but expert opinion seems generally agreed that (disregarding the entirely abnormal conditions brought about by the great war) the reform has had good practical results, and the lugubrious forecasts of those who opposed the closing of the mints appear not to have been realized. At the same time it is not easy in theory to justify the existing position in India. While gold is the standard of value, silver is still legal tender for sums of any amount, even though its intrinsic worth falls far below its exchange value, and no gold coinage has yet been issued by the Indian mints. The improvement in the finances made it possible to alleviate the distress of the population after the

terrible famine of 1899–1900 by granting considerable remissions of taxation. In 1902 the provinces that had suffered most received back a million and a quarter of the land revenue, and within the next two years the salt tax was brought down to a lower point than it had reached since the Mutiny. One other fiscal measure of Lord Curzon's time deserves mention. The financial settlement as between the imperial and provincial government adopted by Lord Mayo (*see* p. 416) was revised, the quinquennial system was abolished, and the arrangement made permanent.

Internally Lord Curzon's period of office was made especially notable for a drastic overhauling of the whole machinery of administration. The Viceroy himself claimed that 'abuses had been swept away, anomalies remedied, the pace quickened and standards raised'. Certainly many departments of government were submitted to searching tests. The method adopted was a preliminary investigation conducted by a committee, followed by legislation carrying out the main recommendations of their report. Lord Curzon found a new use for an old administrative weapon: commissions were utilized not, as was so often the case in the past, to shelve inconvenient questions, but to survey the ground and clear the way for vigorous action. Changing circumstances and the lapse of time had made the traditional methods of the civil service sometimes ineffective and antiquated, sometimes actually mischievous. But the process of reform, however salutary, was not always popular. A few errors were inevitably made, some susceptibilities were ruffled, and many vested interests disturbed. Yet on the whole the results obtained were valuable and the necessity of the reforming process has now been generally recognized. One of the least admirable parts of the administration was the police service, largely staffed in its subordinate branches, and almost entirely manned, by

Indians. The commission that inquired into its condition was highly condemnatory, declaring it to be 'far from efficient . . . defective in training and organization . . . inadequately supervised . . . and generally regarded as corrupt and oppressive'. So severe indeed were the strictures of the commissioners that though the report was signed in 1903 it was withheld from publication till 1905. In that year a reform of the service was inaugurated and some important changes for the better were introduced, but it is still widely recognized that the Indian police system is far from satisfactory.

An important series of measures dealt with the ever-present problem of the land revenue, which is, naturally enough, from time to time subjected to searching criticism by the opponents of the government of India. The extreme presentment of the opposition case, as we have already indicated in Chapter I, is that the frequent occurrence of famine in recent times is due less to the failure of the rains than to the demands of the government upon the ryots, which leave them impoverished and resourceless in time of drought. No impartial or responsible judge can accept so exaggerated a statement. Lord Curzon's government, in the famous resolution on land revenue policy of 1902, pointed out that within seven years drought had inflicted upon the Central Provinces alone a financial loss equal to the whole land revenue for fifty years, so that no remissions could have made any appreciable difference; that though in recent years assessments have steadily diminished, a cycle of unfavourable seasons has resulted in an increasing number of famines, and that drought and scarcity have sometimes slightly affected highly assessed lands while they have fallen with devastating severity on districts more leniently treated. But not all the opponents of the Indian government commit themselves to such an extreme position, nor must we imagine that the easy

refutation of the charge that land revenue causes famine exonerates the administration from all temperate criticism. There were undoubtedly plenty of defects to deplore and errors to amend. Land revenue administration, like most other government activities, tends to become too formal and mechanical in operation. In some provinces revenue has been rigorously collected in the past, though cultivators were impoverished. Settlement officers are naturally prone, as zealous state servants, to raise assessments, if they can, to benefit state revenues. Local governments have sometimes raised the settlement of their own officers. No impartial judge could deny that cases have occurred of serious over-assessment and a too rigid collection of government imposts.

In December 1900 eleven retired Indian civilians possessing records of distinguished service, of whom ten were British and one Indian, addressed a memorial to Lord George Hamilton, the Secretary of State. They quoted with approval the following words of Lord Salisbury written in 1875, 'So far as it is possible to change the Indian fiscal system, it is desirable that the cultivator should pay a smaller proportion of the whole national charge. It is not in itself a thrifty policy to draw the mass of revenue from the rural districts, where capital is scarce, sparing the towns, where it is often redundant and runs to waste and luxury.' Their suggestions were (i) That where land revenue is levied directly from the cultivators the demand should not exceed one-half of their net profit after disbursing the cost of cultivation; (ii) where it is derived from the landlords, it should not exceed one-half of the rental; (iii) that settlements should be for thirty years; (iv) that the only ground for enhancement in the cultivator's assessment should be increased value of the land due either to government irrigation works or a rise in prices; (v) that local taxation on land should in no case exceed a further ten per cent. To this memorial and to criticisms that appeared elsewhere the

Indian government replied in the Land Resolution of January 16, 1902, part of which has been quoted above, admitting that the question was 'one of the highest national importance, transcending the sphere of party or sectional controversy'. In dealing with the memorial, the weakest part of the government's answer was their attempt to meet the first two demands, which were moderate enough and might well have been conceded. Lord Curzon and his advisers declined to make any definite rule on the subject, though they showed that there was a growing tendency for the state share of the produce, both in the case of the cultivator and the landlord, to approximate to the fifty per cent. line and in some cases to fall below it. The reply to the third point was practically a cautious promise to do away in due course with shorter terms of settlement than thirty years. The fourth proposal was not approved. The reply to the fifth was the assertion that the limit of ten per cent. suggested was in fact nowhere exceeded.

Altogether the government went a considerable way to meet the memorialists, and this is plainly shown in the words of Mr. R. C. Dutt, the Indian representative, who thus summed up his view of the Resolution: 'Lord Curzon has approached the subject with a statesmanlike conviction of its importance. He has virtually affirmed the principle which we urged, that in temporarily settled estates held by landlords, the government revenue should generally be limited to one-half the actual rental. He has given us hopes that the rule of thirty years settlements, which we urged, will be extended to the Punjab and the Central Provinces, and he has also given us hopes that the pressure of local cesses will be mitigated. If to all this his Excellency had added some clear and workable limits to the government demand in *Ryotwari* tracts, and defined some intelligible and equitable grounds for enhancement of revenue in such tracts, the government Resolution would have given to

millions of cultivators the assurance and protection they need so much.'[1]

The Land Resolution promised that the government would make a further advance in the direction of 'the progressive and graduated imposition of large enhancements' when they were justified, for they recognized that cases had occurred when 'a reduction of revenue was not granted till the troubles of the people had been aggravated by their efforts to provide the full fixed demand'. The new land policy was also to aim at greater elasticity in the revenue collection and a more general resort to reduction of assessment in cases of local deterioration.

To sum up, Lord Curzon endeavoured to remedy the abuses of the land revenue and ameliorate the whole condition of the Indian peasantry in four ways. He had already in 1900 passed the Punjab Land Alienation Act to free cultivators of the soil from eviction at the hands of money-lenders to whom they may have mortgaged their estates. Lands of an hereditary cultivator cannot henceforward be sold in execution of a decree. This Act is said to have saved the cultivators of the Punjab from wholesale alienation of their land, but to orthodox economists such a measure must appear both wrong in principle and likely to prove hazardous in operation; indeed its ultimate effects may turn out to be the very reverse of what was intended. Lord Curzon's other measures were less open to criticism. As we have seen, the Land Resolution of 1902 ordered that if the revenue were largely increased by a settlement it should be graduated, and, in the further Suspensions and Remissions Resolution of 1905, rules were laid down that the government demand should vary according to the character of the season. In the third place co-operative credit societies were founded to provide cultivators with capital at a low rate of

[1] It is only fair to say that Mr. R. C. Dutt seems afterwards rather to have qualified this favourable verdict.

interest, and finally an Inspector-General of Agriculture was appointed, and an Imperial Agricultural Department, with a research institute, laboratories, and experimental farms, was founded to encourage the application of scientific methods to Indian tillage.

In the army while Lord Kitchener was Commander-in-Chief the native regiments were re-armed, better guns were supplied to the artillery, and the whole transport service was reorganized. In 1901 the Imperial Cadet Corps was founded, consisting of young men of princely and noble families. The services of the Indian army were at this time employed for wider duties than the protection of India itself. Indians were employed against the Boxer insurgents in China and against the Mullah in Somaliland; while in South Africa troops from India helped to hold Ladysmith and to save Natal.

Largely increased expenditure was authorized on railways, and about six thousand miles of new lines were constructed. In regard to his irrigation policy it has been said of Lord Curzon that 'he only carried on . . . what others had done before him; but the special merit of his labours lay in the fact that he systematized the whole enterprise, prepared a clear and final programme which represented the utmost possible extension of the Indian irrigation system, arranged for its finance and for its steady prosecution, and incidentally silenced the foolish criticism which had been propagated without a check for years'.[1]

A new department of Commerce and Industry was established, presided over by a sixth member of the Viceroy's council. Lord Curzon's other activities included measures for preserving ancient buildings and monuments in India, and an attempt to put some check upon the elaborate system of minute and report writing, which he described as the most 'perfect and pernicious' in the world.

Lastly the thorny question of education was investigated

[1] Lovat Fraser, *India under Lord Curzon and After*, 1911, p. 304.

by a commission which, perhaps unfortunately, contained no Indian representative, and only one non-official member. Its report on the condition of Indian education, though cautiously worded, was on the whole disappointing. The theory of the pioneers in 1854 had been that education administered to the upper classes through the universities would 'filter down' to the lower social strata of the population. The commissioners considered that this sanguine hope had been largely falsified. Nor indeed could it be considered surprising if it were so. Even in western countries we know only too well how hard it is to maintain a high ideal of education, and how dissatisfied most nations are to-day with systems once considered, humanly speaking, near perfection. A university degree—designed to be a test of culture—was undoubtedly often looked upon by the clever quick-witted Bengali merely as an open sesame to a post in the Provincial Civil Service. But perhaps it is only fair to point out that many of those who pass this criticism seem to forget that a similar use of academic success for professional reasons is not entirely unknown even in this fortunate country. Indian universities were mere examining boards; they had tended to free themselves from state control, and they encouraged a system of 'cramming' which often produced the most lamentable effects when brought to bear upon the impressionable minds and imitative capacities of eastern peoples. The system of higher education in India, says an able critic, was 'mechanical, lifeless, perverted', and Lord Curzon himself declared with a great deal of truth, 'it has taught the people of India the catchwords of western civilization without inspiring them with its spirit or inculcating its sobriety'. Accordingly in 1904 the governing bodies of the universities were reorganized in the hope that they might be converted from mere examining boards to training institutions, and that the teaching staff, now given more power and scope, might work less with the purpose of mechanically

turning out large numbers of graduates and more with the aim of establishing a sound system of education. But the changes were very unpopular with the Indian Reform party, who believed that they were made with the idea of undermining their influence. It is to a certain extent true to say that up to this time the party had supported Lord Curzon, but that they now turned against him. Indeed, first of all the education problem and secondly the Partition of Bengal revealed a fundamental divergence in the standpoints of the Viceroy and the *Intelligentsia.* Lord Curzon's aim was practical social reform, sound administration, and, above all, efficiency in method. He was impatient—perhaps sometimes too impatient—of incompetency and delay; he was loath to exchange counsels of perfection for a second best accommodated to the prejudices of the ruled. The interest of the National Congress Party was the fascinating pursuit of constitutional experiment, the application to Indian politics of all those western democratic creeds and party cries which they had so eagerly assimilated. The estrangement between the Viceroy and the Nationalist Party was the more to be regretted in that Lord Curzon undoubtedly had the welfare of the people at heart. It is only fair to record here that from the first he sternly set his face against any attempt to condone oppression or insulting treatment of Indians by men of European birth, and was ready in this cause to jeopardize his popularity with the army or the non-official British residents in India.

On New Year's Day 1903 Lord Curzon proclaimed King Edward VII Emperor of India at the Coronation Durbar held at Delhi, a pageant which in splendour surpassed even that of 1877. In April 1904 Lord Curzon, having served the normal period of the Viceregal office, was reappointed for a further term and sailed to England for a few months' rest, Lord Ampthill, the Governor of Madras, holding the reins of office during his absence. In Decem-

ber 1904 Lord Curzon returned to deal with two great problems which brought his extended period of office to an abrupt close amid heated controversies and embittered criticisms.

The first problem was the Partition of Bengal. There had long been a pressing need to lighten the duties of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, his charge having grown to be a burden beyond the capabilities of any single man to bear. The population of the province was seventy-eight millions, almost twice that of the United Kingdom. One result of the impossible pressure of work upon the Lieutenant-Governor had been the unavoidable isolation of the districts of the province that lay east of the Ganges. That part of Bengal had been sadly neglected and formed a stagnant backwater in relation to the broad well-channelled river of British administration. The peasants suffered from the exactions of absentee landlords, and the police system was even worse than in other parts of India. Internal communications, in a country interlaced with broad estuaries, were bad, and a recent commission of inquiry had revealed an appalling condition of habitual outrage and undetected crime in the more remote districts, so that 'life and property on the rivers was unsafe to a degree which could not be tolerated by the government of any civilized country'.

There was abundant historical precedent for subdividing the province. The original Presidency of Fort William in Bengal had been lightened by the creation of the North-West Provinces (now the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh) in 1877 and by the placing of Assam under a separate High Commissioner in 1874. The Indian government now made up its mind that the time had come for a further partition of the province. There was no undue haste, as has been sometimes alleged, nor any particularly high-handed procedure. The policy was fully deliberated, many alternative schemes were considered, and the plans were modified from time to

time in accordance with criticism from outside. Finally a new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was constituted by amalgamating Assam and Chittagong with fifteen districts of old Bengal. The new province had an area of about 106,000 square miles and a population of about 31,000,000.

Before the reform was completed a fierce popular agitation flared out against the proposed change. The feeling aroused was no doubt partly genuine, but largely based upon a misunderstanding of the point at issue. But there can be no possible doubt, on an impartial view of the evidence, that the agitation was adroitly manipulated, often by questionable methods, by the literary and legal classes, whose vested interests in the Indian Press and the Calcutta Bar were considered to be threatened by the change. To pass so much of censure on the outcry does not of course imply for a moment, as is sometimes hastily assumed, that Indians are necessarily from their national character unfit for democratic government, or at any rate that they are more unfit than European peoples. Our own history affords abundant examples—for instance, Walpole's excise scheme in 1733—of salutary measures prevented by factious popular clamour. Everywhere in the world political agitations tend to assume in a free atmosphere an element of grotesque extravagance, and under western as well as under eastern skies the dry light of reason pales before the lurid glow of controversy and the storm-shot clouds of prejudice and party passion. To the government the Partition of Bengal was, in Lord Curzon's words, 'a mere readjustment of administrative boundaries', proposed with a view to the more efficient working of the imperial machine. To excited popular orators in Calcutta it meant the partition of a nation, an attempt to divide a homogeneous people, a deliberate and sinister attack upon the traditions, history, and even the language of the Bengalis. Not, of course, that all the opposition was attuned to this extravagant key. The more

moderate party, supported by a section of Liberalism in England and a minority of the civil service, argued that, whatever the abstract merits of the scheme, it should have been abandoned when it was found to be repugnant to national sentiment. They did not, for that was clearly impossible, deny the need of some change. The solution they put forward was that Bengal, like Madras and Bombay, should be ruled by a Governor assisted by an executive council. Historically there was much to be said for this contention; the Charter Acts of 1833 and 1853 had actually authorized such a government, and the Act of 1853 had merely legalized the appointment of Lieutenant-Governors 'unless and until' this change could conveniently be made.

But their solution found no favour with the government, which replied that the Councils in Bombay and Madras were not designed to relieve the Governors of those presidencies of their work, but to supply the want of special Indian knowledge in distinguished public men appointed from outside the ranks of the civil service. Bengal, a province where there were many varieties of race and many problems which required firm handling and expert knowledge, was best controlled by a Lieutenant-Governor who had risen through every grade of the Indian administration. An executive council would only tie his hands and divide responsibility. Lord Curzon, in short, wished to weaken the executive as little as possible, while his opponents were eager to experiment in decentralization. But the Viceroy, unlike Walpole, was determined not to yield to popular clamour, which he believed to be partly unscrupulous and partly misinformed, and the partition was carried through in 1905. Was he wrong? Taking all the facts into consideration, I cannot think so. There seems little ground for supposing that the storm of opposition, which sprang up as suddenly as a squall upon landlocked waters, could have been foreseen. The Government was committed too far

to draw back when the first indications of the hurricane were descried. Nothing is more fatal to a government than to create the impression that it will always yield to pressure. By doing so, it wins neither the gratitude of its opponents nor peace for itself. You cannot conduct a successful administration by a policy of continually selling the pass. Measures advanced to a certain stage must be carried through, or their authors stand forth as bankrupt in credit and prospects.

The second problem, which brought about Lord Curzon's retirement, was a disagreement with Lord Kitchener on the question of military administration. The matter in dispute is technical and difficult to explain, but a summary of it must be attempted. The existing system was as follows: The executive head of the army in India was the Commander-in-Chief, who could be, and in practice always was, appointed an extraordinary member of the Viceroy's council. There was, besides, an army administrative department in charge of an ordinary member of council, which kept closely in touch with the supreme government to an extent impossible to the Commander-in-Chief engaged in his manifold executive duties. This member of council was a soldier, but was not allowed during his term of office to hold any army command. He was the constitutional adviser of the Viceroy in military matters, and it was one of his duties to transmit to the Governor-General, with his own criticisms, all proposals on army administration made by the Commander-in-Chief. Lord Kitchener, who carried through in the military sphere much the same sort of salutary and drastic reforms as Lord Curzon himself achieved in civil government, who had moreover up till now received the Viceroy's cordial support, strongly objected to this rather cumbrous departmental machinery. It was, he declared, productive of 'enormous delay and endless discussion'. He advocated the creation of a single army

department of which the Commander-in-Chief should be the head, and to which the whole business of military administration should be transferred. To this suggestion Lord Curzon and the rest of the council were unanimously opposed, holding that it would 'concentrate military authority in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief and subvert the supremacy of the civil power by depriving it of independent military advice'.

There seems on the face of it some reason for Lord Kitchener's dissatisfaction. Though the ordinary member of council of the time, Sir Edmond Elles, strongly dissented from Lord Kitchener's strictures, some delay and dislocation calculated to chafe an able and determined Commander-in-Chief must have been inevitable in the transmission of business through so complicated a system. Lord Kitchener maintained that in his suggested plan the supremacy of the civil power was left untouched, for it would still be possible for the Viceroy to accept or reject any proposals submitted, but he demanded that the head of the supreme government should be brought into closer relations with the head of the army, and he considered it highly undesirable that the proposals of the Commander-in-Chief 'should be criticized from a military point of view by the Military Member of Council, who must always necessarily be both junior in rank and inferior in military experience to the Commander-in-Chief'. Lord Curzon's answer to this in effect was that, unless he had some competent military authority to advise him, it would be difficult in practice for a civilian Viceroy to oppose a strong-willed Commander-in-Chief, and therefore a civil power would be too dependent on the head of the army. He pointed out also that the question was not entirely new—it had been considered before by Viceroys and Commanders-in-Chief in the past, but the experience of forty years, after periodical examinations of the problem, had always ended by deciding to retain the old system.

Official opinion in India was almost entirely with Lord Curzon.

Such was the problem—a deadlock between high authorities in India—which the home government was called upon to solve. It seems, perhaps, obvious that the most satisfactory course would have been to come down decisively on one side or the other. But the Unionist government was now within sight of the breakers of dissolution; it was generally supposed, with some reason, that they were not anxious to go to the country with the resignation either of a brilliant Governor-General or a great and popular soldier upon their hands. They therefore attempted a compromise which was not very happily inspired. It barely satisfied Lord Kitchener, appeared to Lord Curzon merely to veil a surrender to his rival, and certainly seems to the plain man to diffuse darkness rather than light over a situation already sufficiently obscure. The Cabinet's solution was that the Commander-in-Chief should exclusively control the strictly military departments of army administration, and should alone have the right to speak in the Governor-General's council as an expert on military problems, but that subsidiary departments, not purely military, should be left in charge of another member of council known as the Military Supply Member. It was suggested that Sir Edmond Elles, as connected with the old system, should retire, and that Lord Curzon should propose another officer to be his successor, with the curtailed powers henceforward allotted to the office. Mr. Brodrick, the Secretary of State, was able to announce to the House of Commons that the compromise was accepted by both parties. But unhappily it soon became clear that Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener, as was not perhaps altogether surprising, understood different things by the government's dispatch. Lord Curzon proposed Sir Edmund Barrow, but the home government declined his nomination for reasons that seemed sound in themselves

and were entirely creditable to that distinguished officer. Mr. Brodrick then suggested, not very tactfully, that Lord Curzon should consult Lord Kitchener as to the officer to be selected. The dispatch was so unhappily worded that Lord Ripon—an impartial witness, as standing in Indian policy poles asunder from Lord Curzon—declared in the House of Lords that no such dispatch had been addressed to the Government of India since Lord Ellenborough sent to Lord Canning his famous letter on the affairs of Oudh. Lord Curzon, convinced now that the government were not prepared to allow him the kind of military adviser he desired, resigned his office in August 1905. The Cabinet asked him to withdraw his resignation, but he declined to do so.

Lord Curzon was succeeded by Lord Minto, the great-grandson of the first earl, who was Governor-General from 1807 to 1813. The new Viceroy had fought in Afghanistan under Lord Roberts in 1878 and had been Governor-General of Canada from 1898 to 1904.

It is no doubt too early yet to anticipate by conjecture Lord Curzon's final place in history. The present writer has not refrained from criticism where to the best of his judgement criticism seemed to be called for. Many judges, whose opinion is worthy of all respect, would carry that criticism much farther. It is probable enough that much of the unrest in India was due to the all-pervading rather restless energy of his ardent spirit, just as Lord Dalhousie's great governor-generalship had assuredly something to do with the cataclysm of the Mutiny. It is indeed an arguable position that the most successful rulers of men are those sedate, clear-eyed, disillusioned characters like Lord Northbrook or Lord Dufferin, who are content to guide circumspectly the ship of state, who distrust heroic policies, and do not believe that it is either desirable or possible for one man to mould to his will such a colossal organism as that of the imperial

government of India. But as long as personal force, initiative, will, and eloquence are valued in politics, Lord Curzon will always stand out as a great figure. No man could set forth in more stately language the best aspect of Great Britain's rule in the East. 'I am not one of those', he said, 'who think that we have built a mere fragile plank between the East and the West which the roaring tides of Asia will presently sweep away . . . as the years roll by, the call seems to me more clear, the duty more imperative, the work more majestic, the goal more sublime . . . To me the message is carved in granite, it is hewn out of the rock of doom—that our work is righteous and that it shall endure.' And so while men may legitimately differ as to Lord Curzon's statesmanship and as to the ultimate effect of his general policy upon the destinies of the people he was called upon to govern, there can hardly be any question as to the high ideals that inspired him, or of the devotion to duty which, in the teeth of much ill-health, domestic sorrow, and physical pain, drove him on to the end of his course. His final speech in India, which ended with one of the noblest passages in modern oratory, summed up his conception of the Englishman's task in India. 'A hundred times in India have I said to myself, Oh that to every Englishman in this country, as he ends his work, might be truthfully applied the phrase: "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity." No man has, I believe, ever served India faithfully of whom that could not be said. All other triumphs are tinsel and sham. Perhaps there are few of us who make anything but a poor approximation to that ideal. But let it be our ideal all the same. To fight for the right, to abhor the imperfect, the unjust, or the mean, to swerve neither to the right hand nor to the left, to care nothing for flattery or applause, or odium or abuse—it is so easy to have any of them in India—never to let your enthusiasm be soured or your courage grow dim, but to

remember that the Almighty has placed your hand on the greatest of His ploughs, in whose furrow the nations of the future are germinating and taking shape, to drive the blade a little forward in your time, and to feel that somewhere among these millions you have left a little justice or happiness or prosperity, a sense of manliness or moral dignity, a spring of patriotism, a dawn of intellectual enlightenment, or a stirring of duty, where it did not before exist—that is enough, that is the Englishman's justification in India. It is enough for his watchword while he is here, for his epitaph when he is gone. I have worked for no other aim. Let India be my judge.'

These proud and noble words formed the fitting conclusion to a great viceroyalty. They are valid as an *apologia* not only at the bar of Indian public opinion but before the higher court of the world and of time. Whatever errors, whatever failures—and both error and failure are inseparable from human agency—critics may detect in his six years of office, it cannot be doubted that when the cloud-belts of contemporary detractation have cleared away, Lord Curzon's name will stand amongst the foremost of those that make up the illustrious roll of the Governors-General of India.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MORLEY-MINTO REFORMS. THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN CONVENTION

THE departure of Lord Curzon marked a real epoch in Indian history. It synchronized with the advent to power in England of the most powerful Liberal and Radical government that had ever been successful at the polls. This event was destined to have profound and far-reaching effects upon the whole problem of British rule in India. It seemed indeed the irony of fate that, immediately after Lord Curzon, by indomitable labour, had renovated and strengthened the machinery of Indian administration, a party should succeed to power which was more concerned to apply conceptions of popular and constitutional government to our Eastern Empire than to pursue drastic reforming methods though the agency of an enlightened bureaucracy—a party which believed in freedom rather than in discipline, in autonomy rather than efficiency. The new Secretary of State, Mr. John Morley, was a man of strong personality, who, though he seemed to the 'impatient idealists' of his party to be unduly ready to compromise the hitherto unsuspected orthodoxy of his Liberalism, was determined to make his office a reality and to introduce constitutional reforms in India. Some former Secretaries of State might have been regarded merely as necessary links between the Cabinet and the Viceroys. Such was not Mr. Morley's conception of his position, and, even if he did not go so far as to regard the Governor-General as his 'agent' (though that designation was once employed by his under-secretary),

yet he undoubtedly demanded a larger and more direct share in the administration than former Secretaries of State had been wont to claim. It is indeed inevitable that the viceroyalty of Lord Minto and Mr. Morley's rule at the India Office should be closely associated. They were appointed within a few weeks of one another. Lord Morley of Blackburn (he had been elevated to the peerage in 1908) resigned in October 1910 and Lord Minto left India a month later. Both Secretary of State and Viceroy in their co-operation depended less than most of their predecessors on the expert guidance and accumulated experience of their permanent officials, and, without prejudging the question of gain or loss to the country, it is certainly true that the famous Morley-Minto reforms 'were in the main the outcome of an exchange of views between two statesmen whose knowledge of India was obviously limited'.[1]

The time and manner of Lord Curzon's departure left some troublesome questions for his successors, and Lord Minto had embarrassments of his own to face arising from the fact that, though he had been sent to India by a Unionist government to support Lord Kitchener, he was called upon to work with a Liberal ministry, the sympathies of whose supporters, though against Lord Curzon in regard to the partition of Bengal, had been entirely with him in his disagreement with the Commander-in-Chief. The same question for a different reason had its difficulties for the Secretary of State. The English party system which suddenly transforms a free lance of opposition into a responsible minister of the Crown often plays strange tricks with men's endeavours to maintain political consistency. Mr. Morley had apparently burnt his boats in regard to the

[1] Sir Valentine Chirol in *The Times*. See also Mr. Lovat Fraser in the *Edinburgh Review* for January 1918: 'Lord Morley . . . whatever his virtues may have been, was certainly the most autocratic and the least constitutional Secretary of State ever seen in Whitehall.'

Curzon-Kitchener controversy by a declaration to his constituents just before he accepted the seals of office. ('Lord Curzon', he said, 'has been chased out of power by the military, and the Secretary of State (Mr. Brodrick) has sanctioned that operation. If there is one principle more than another that has been accepted in this country since the day when Charles I lost his head, it is this: that the civil power shall be supreme over the military power. That is what you will find at the India Office: that they have been guilty of this great dereliction, this great departure from those standard maxims of public administration which had been practically sacred in these islands ever since the days of the Civil War.') The still lingering echoes of these resounding periods did not make the position any the easier, and Mr. Morley's opponents waited with some natural curiosity and a certain cynical amusement to see how he would meet the situation. Strict logic should have led him to reverse the decision of his predecessor, but that would undoubtedly have meant the resignation both of the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief—a contingency that the new Cabinet could hardly have faced. Mr. Morley therefore decided with what grace he could muster to accept the *fait accompli* and not to reopen the question 'at the risk of an indefinite prolongation of fruitless and injurious controversy'. (The Commander-in-Chief henceforward became an ordinary member of council and the army department was placed in his charge. The military supply department was created and was presided over by another member of council, but it proved an arrangement, in Lord Morley's words, 'good neither for administration nor for economy.' It was abolished in 1907, having rather expensively fulfilled its real, though unavowed, function of saving illustrious faces.) In the end, therefore, Lord Kitchener's view prevailed, but twelve years later, in tragic circumstances and at a terrible crisis, Lord Curzon's position in the controversy

was completely vindicated. In the intervening time the control of the government of India over military policy had seriously weakened. The concentration of executive and administrative power in the hands of one overworked Commander-in-Chief resulted in the breakdown of the transport and of the medical service in Mesopotamia during the great war. The commission of inquiry that followed passed a scathing condemnation on the Kitchener system and declared that it was impossible for the duties of Commander-in-Chief and military member to be adequately performed by any one man in time of war.

Mr. Morley also declined to reverse the Partition of Bengal. He declared his opinion that the policy of his predecessors had been mistaken in its methods, but added that it was a settled matter as far as he was concerned. The agitation, however, still continued, and led to an incident which brought much criticism and embarrassment upon the Indian government. An objectionable feature of the movement had been the participation of Bengali schoolboys in political meetings, often with the connivance of their teachers. Sir J. Bampfylde Fuller, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, addressed a circular to the educational department deprecating this practice, and threatening that the government would withdraw pecuniary aid from the schools where it was countenanced, and would recommend the Calcutta University to disaffiliate them. Two schools in the Patna district disregarded these orders, and sheltered the ringleaders among their scholars. Sir J. Bampfylde Fuller applied to the Calcutta University to disaffiliate the schools concerned, but was requested by the government of India to withdraw his application on the ground that it would result in an acrimonious debate in the senate of the university, which, in the excited condition of public feeling, would be highly undesirable. The Lieutenant-Governor thereupon tendered his resignation,

unless the Indian government should reconsider their request, and his resignation was accepted. The incident was naturally regarded as a triumph for the opponents of the Partition, and Lord Curzon, in the House of Lords, declared that Fuller 'was sacrificed in the mistaken belief that it would pacify the agitators'. The reply of the Indian government was that they could not submit to the dictation of one of their own officials, but this hardly answered the charge that they were prepared to allow the schools to defy the Lieutenant-Governor, and Sir J. Bampfylde Fuller had many to sympathize with him.

In the foreign policy of the new Liberal government one of the most noteworthy achievements was the threefold convention between Great Britain and Russia concluded in 1907, relating to Tibet, Afghanistan, and Persia, which settled by peaceful diplomacy three long outstanding questions of Asian politics. In reviewing the external relations of India under Lord Minto's government it will perhaps be most convenient if, bearing this central fact in mind, we consider separately our relations with each of the three countries concerned, showing in due course how the agreement with Russia affected them.

Mr. Morley and Lord Minto took up the threads of the Tibetan question where their predecessors had dropped them. It was still requisite to gain the formal assent of China as suzerain of Tibet to the Treaty of Lhasa of 1904. The original intention was that she should sign a mere 'adhesion agreement', but this developed into a convention, concluded at Pekin in April 1906, which, besides confirming the Treaty of Lhasa, contained two other clauses. By the first, Great Britain bound herself neither to annex the country nor to interfere in its internal administration; by the second, China engaged to impose like restrictions on all other foreign powers. The second clause, though verbally a concession to Great Britain, was actually quite as much

to the advantage of the Chinese as to ourselves, and certainly gave some colour to the contention of those who asserted that China secured all the advantages of our interference in Tibetan affairs. Throughout the whole course of the negotiations the Indian government, anxious to secure what fruits they could of Lord Curzon's policy, tried to insist on the *ipsissima verba* of the Treaty of Lhasa. The Secretary of State, on the other hand, was determined, and rightly, to withdraw from the whole entanglement as soon as possible, and in the end he prevailed. He therefore conceded the point, against the earnest representations of Simla, that the Chinese should pay the indemnity instead of the Tibetans, and should do so in three instalments instead of twenty-five. In 1908 the Chinese government asked that, the indemnity being paid, we should evacuate the Chumbi valley, according to our promise. Against this the Indian government protested on the ground that the Tibetans had not faithfully carried out their part of the Treaty in respect to the establishment of trade marts, and that by a withdrawal we were giving up the only guarantee we had for the fulfilment of the Treaty. But the Secretary of State, believing that for reasons of policy and expediency it was desirable that our occupation of the valley should terminate at once, disregarded the protest, and our troops were withdrawn in February 1908. In the meantime the convention between Great Britain and Russia of August 1907 had doubly barred the gates of Tibet against any further intrusion on the part of Europeans. Both powers agreed to respect the integrity of Tibetan territory, to abstain from any intervention in its internal administration, to treat with the government only through the Chinese, and to send no emissaries to Lhasa. In fact, Great Britain and Russia by this convention mutually agreed upon a self-denying ordinance in regard to Tibet. Two results, unexpected but perhaps inevitable, followed. The Dalai Lama

was eventually deposed, and the whole control of the country passed into the hands of the Chinese Residents, who displayed a decidedly anti-British bias. In July 1908 the Dalai Lama was summoned to Pekin, and was there made so acutely to feel his inferiority that in 1910, after his return to Tibet, he appealed for help to the British government against the advance of Chinese troops on Lhasa. In February of that year he fled once more from his capital and crossed the Indian frontier to Darjeeling. The wheel had come full circle, and the traditional exclusiveness of the Tibetan was utterly broken down. The Tashi Lama had already crossed the Indian frontier in 1905–6 and been received in audience by the Prince of Wales and the Viceroy, and now the Dalai Lama himself, who had fled with horror from Lhasa in 1904 that his eyes might not even rest upon Europeans, visited the capital of British India and had an interview with Lord Minto. There he asked, but of course asked in vain, for help against the Chinese government, which in February had formally deposed him by an imperial decree. We were precluded now by our own action from giving him any aid, even had we desired to do so, and we could do nothing except address a mild and ineffective protest to the Chinese government. A new Dalai Lama was in due course found who was under the complete control of the Chinese Residents.

Mr. Morley's policy in regard to Tibet may be said to have skilfully settled a difficult question and to have disentangled us from a position that was full of danger. Opponents held that it amounted to a surrender of the aims of Lord Curzon's policy. But after all the main motive underlying Younghusband's expedition was to prevent the penetration of Tibet by Russian influence, and that end was secured by the convention of 1907. The pity is that the Russian and British governments could not have worked out such a solution in 1903. The whole trouble and

expense of the expedition would then have been saved, Tibetan lives would not have been needlessly sacrificed at Guru, the Dalai Lama need not have been deposed, nor Tibet have passed under the despotic sway of China.

The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, so far as it affected Afghanistan, did little more than recognize the *status quo*. Great Britain disclaimed any intention of altering the political position there, and Russia, definitely acknowledging that Afghanistan lay outside her sphere of influence, agreed to act in all political relations with the Amir only through the British government, and to send no agents into the country. Equal commercial privileges were to be enjoyed both by British and Russian traders. From regard to the feelings of our ally it was stipulated that these arrangements were not to come into force till Great Britain was able to notify to Russia the Amir's assent to them. As a matter of fact, in spite of this precaution, Habibulla was affronted at this agreement between the two countries in regard to his dominions, and refused to give the convention his formal approval. This was the more to be regretted because he had paid a visit to England in the earlier part of the year, and seemed largely to have laid aside his former resentment against the British.

The convention in regard to Persia was more important than in the case of either Tibet or Afghanistan. It quite possibly prevented a disastrous war between England and Russia, and deserves to be ranked as one of the most notable diplomatic triumphs of the time. The disintegration of the Persian empire referred to in Chapter XIII was proceeding apace. During the period 1905–10 the condition of the country was rapidly lapsing into chaos. Persia's deplorable state was only intensified by the fact that western ideas of constitutionalism and popular government were germinating among her people, for the new wine of democracy proved too powerful a solvent for the old bottles of

eastern autocracy. It was, therefore, a wise provision that inspired Great Britain and Russia to lay down certain definite rules circumscribing their position in regard to Persian territory, and defining their attitude towards the perilous situation created there.

The convention, though binding both Russia and Great Britain to respect the integrity and political independence of Persia, demarcated a Russian sphere of influence in northern Persia and a British sphere of influence in the south-eastern provinces. Each country agreed in regard to the other's sphere 'not to seek for herself or her own subjects or those of any other country any political or commercial concessions such as railway, banking, telegraph, roads, transport, or insurance', or to oppose the acquisition of such concessions by the other party to the agreement. The Russian sphere was bounded to the south by a line passing through Kasr-i-Shirin, Isfahan, Yezd, and Kakhk, the British by a northern boundary running from Bander Abbas through Kerman to Birjand. It was announced by Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, that the Persian Gulf lay outside the scope of the convention, but that Russia had stated during the negotiations that she did not deny the special interests of Great Britain in the Gulf.

The convention was subjected to criticism, less for the general principle involved, though it is true that 'there is something amazingly cynical in the spirit in which western powers dispose of the heritage of other races',[1] as for the details of the bargain. One party declared that the Russian sphere of influence was too large and the British sphere too small, but as stated in Chapter XIII Russian penetration of northern Persia had proceeded very far, and there is no doubt that in this respect British statesmen, in the words of Sir J. D. Rees, 'had not so much given away advantages as accepted a position that had grown up'. The real justifica-

[1] Lovat Fraser, *India under Curzon and After*, p. 128.

tion for this fine piece of statesmanship is that it averted any serious trouble between Russia and Great Britain between the years 1907 and 1910 when Persia was in the throes of revolution and aflame with disorder—a situation affording innumerable opportunities for either side to intervene had there been no previous understanding.

In internal matters the agitation against the Partition of Bengal developed into a general political ferment throughout India. Indian unrest may, perhaps, be best characterized in the Secretary of State's own words. 'Of deeper moment', he wrote, 'loomed the vision of a wave of political unrest from various causes, partly superficial, partly fundamental, slowly sweeping over India. Revolutionary voices, some moderate, others extreme, grew articulate and shrill, and claims or aspirations for extending the share of peoples in their own government took more organized shape. . . . Mechanical facility of communication between West and East improved almost from day to day, and made the transmission of sympathetic political currents more and more direct.'[1] This movement is the most momentous event of our time in Indian History. It is almost impossible to exaggerate its importance or the influence it is exerting on the whole problem of our position in the East. A brief analysis of the causes that produced it is, therefore, necessary

The movement was part of a greater one. The continent of Asia was beginning in the world both of politics and of thought to rise from its old-world lethargy and free itself from the domination of Europeans. Japan had defeated the mighty armies of Russia. 'The reverberations of that victory', said Lord Curzon, 'have gone like a thunderclap through the whispering galleries of the East'. Western nations found both their material and spiritual weapons deftly turned against them, for the East, even in revolt, was imitative, and just as Japan vanquished Russia by modern

[1] Lord Morley's *Recollections*, vol. ii, p. 149.

weapons of precision so in Persia, India, and China the reform party modelled themselves on the most approved pattern of Western Liberalism, and derived their political armament from the political philosophy and literature of Europe.

Causes more particularly connected with India were first of all the high hopes excited by the advent to power of a great Radical majority at Westminster, many members of which were known to sympathize with the Indian 'Progressive' party. Secondly, there was the rapidly growing influence of the Indian National Congress and the gradual drawing together, at any rate in open political alliance, of the Hindu and Muhammadan leaders, although originally the Muhammadans had opposed the movement, and as lately as 1899 their chief representatives, under the presidency of Sir Amir Hassan, declared that the congress policy impeded the true political and moral progress of the country. Thirdly, there was no doubt a certain revolt against the vigorous efficient autocratic rule of Lord Curzon, which, rightly or wrongly, the Nationalist leaders considered to be reactionary in many of its aspects.

Like most progressive parties the Indian reformers contained a moderate and an extremist section. Men like the late R. C. Dutt, the late Mr. Gokhale, and Sir Satyendra Sinha maintained with moderation and great ability views which though advanced were inherently reasonable and logical. But the extremists by a revolutionary propaganda and inflammatory speeches embarked on a campaign which soon led to outrages and political assassinations. In April dangerous riots occurred at Lahore and Rawal Pindi. The position became so threatening that the government were compelled in the following month to issue an ordinance (later embodied in an Act) empowering local governments to 'proclaim' certain districts with the result that no public meetings could be held in them without seven days' notice

being first given to the authorities, and to deport offenders under a Regulation of 1818. At the National Congress in December, held at Surat, the moderates and the extremists joined issue in a contest between two candidates for the chairmanship, the nominee of the latter being a man who had lately been deported for his share in the Punjab riots. The contest ended in a free fight and was adjourned *sine die*, but the moderate party immediately afterwards issued a manifesto that their goal was the attainment by constitutional and lawful means of the same position for India in the empire as that of Canada and the other self-governing colonies. Unfortunately in the next year, 1908, the seditious agitation continued and was accompanied by murderous attacks upon Europeans and others. On the earnest representations of the Indian government, and much against his will, the Secretary of State was obliged to sanction special legislation to meet the campaign of violence. Two Acts were passed making it a felony to manufacture or possess explosives or to incite to murder in the press, and later the Legislative Council sanctioned in a single sitting without opposition an Act conferring upon the courts summary jurisdiction in cases of seditious violence.

Nothing could well have been more inopportune than this outburst of political crime. Lord Morley and Lord Minto were honestly desirous of taking some decided steps in the direction of liberalizing Indian institutions, though the manifesto even of the moderate party was regarded by them as embodying a distant ideal at present quite unattainable. They had already begun to formulate reforms. The question was whether they were now to withhold their hand in view of what had occurred. They decided not to flinch in the course they had marked out. Lord Morley believed that the best way to draw the teeth of the extremists was to win the support of the moderate party by granting a real measure of reform. At the same time it was impossible to tolerate

anarchy, and, therefore, the Indian government adopted that 'blended policy of repression and concession' to which it was easier to object than to suggest an alternative. The repression was certainly not excessive; indeed a high authority has declared that 'many innocent victims paid with their lives for the extraordinary supineness displayed in those first disastrous two years of Lord Minto's administration'.[1] The Secretary of State and the Viceroy suffered the usual fate of statesmen who adopt a moderate course, in being attacked from opposite sides as both revolutionary and reactionary. They persevered, however, with their policy, and so it came about that this year—so darkened by conspiracies and assassinations—witnessed at its close both the message of King Edward VII to the princes and peoples of India on the fiftieth anniversary of the assumption of government by the Crown, and the unfolding by Lord Morley in the House of Lords of plans intended to be the first step in the realization of the promised reforms. The message of November 2 began with a proud yet not unjustified claim for the recognition of Great Britain's services to India. 'Half a century is but a brief span in your long annals, yet this half century that ends to-day will stand amid the floods of your historic ages, a far shining landmark. The proclamation of the direct supremacy of the Crown sealed the unity of Indian government and opened a new era. The journey was arduous and the advance may have sometimes seemed slow; but the incorporation of many strangely diversified communities, and of some three hundred millions of the human race, under British guidance and control has proceeded steadfastly and without pause. We survey our labours of the past half century with clear gaze and good conscience.' After an enumeration of the benefits of British rule the message proceeded to a promise of further constitutional development. 'From the first, the principle of

[1] *Indian Unrest*, by Sir Valentine Chirol, 1910, p. 96.

representative institutions began to be gradually introduced, and the time has come when, in the judgement of my Viceroy and Governor-General and others of my counsellors, that principle may be prudently extended.' The Indian Councils Act which was a further development of Lord Cross's Act of 1892 (see Chap. XI, p. 498) was passed in February 1909. It provided for an increase in the numbers of the vice-regal and provincial Legislative Councils. The Executive Councils of Madras and Bombay were also to be enlarged and such councils were to be established in provinces ruled by Lieutenant-Governors. In the constitution of the Legislative Councils the principle of election was to be introduced side by side with that of nomination. The Act was mainly permissive in form, for almost everything depended on the actual Rules and Regulations which had still to be drawn up, and it has been rather appositely described as 'little more than a blank cheque drawn in favour of the Secretary of State, leaving in his hands the ultimate shape of the rules and regulations on which everything depended'.[1]

Unfortunately the Act had no effect as a check upon the anarchists. In February the Public Prosecutor of Bengal was shot dead by a Bengali student. In July Sir Curzon Wyllie was assassinated by a Punjabi at the Imperial Institute in London, and in December Jackson, a Bombay civilian, was murdered by a young Marathi Brahmin in an Indian theatre, while in the preceding month an attempt, fortunately unsuccessful, was made on the life of the Viceroy at Ahmadabad.

The Rules and Regulations defining the operation of the Act were published in November. They were too long and intricate to admit of an easily intelligible summary. The most elaborate arrangements were made for the representation in the legislative councils of various classes

[1] The Annual Register, 1909.

and minorities, for instance, of Muhammadans, landowners, the tea and jute industries, and Indian commerce. The Imperial Legislative Council was increased from twenty-one members to a maximum of sixty; the other legislative councils being generally rather more than doubled. In Madras and Bombay the members of the executive councils were increased in number from two to four. The Secretary of State supplemented these reforms by the striking innovation of appointing an Indian member to the Viceroy's Executive Council, other Indians to the Executive Councils of Bombay and Madras, and two to the Council at the India Office. Though in this way a great and notable advance was made, especially in the fact that an Indian sitting in the Viceroy's Cabinet was necessarily admitted to the most secret counsels of the government—a step in advance which was deprecated even by such stalwart Liberals as Lord Elgin and Lord Ripon—yet the Morley-Minto reforms failed to satisfy the National Congress Party, who had hoped that the whole of India would be divided into large popular constituencies. They criticized especially the principle of class representation on the ground that it created a distinction between the different classes of the community and made the fusion of their interests impossible. It is true that to satisfy these aims had at no time been the intention of the authors of the Act. 'If I were attempting', said Lord Morley in the House of Lords, 'to set up a parliamentary system in India, or, if it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or indirectly to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I for one would have nothing to do with it . . . If my existence, either officially or corporeally, were to be prolonged twenty times longer than either is likely to be, a parliamentary system in India is not at all the goal to which I would for a moment aspire'.

Yet the life of the *régime* based upon the Act of 1907 has

been but a decade, and it is now under criticism' and revision. The Morley-Minto constitution turned out to be after all only a half-way house. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report of July 1918 condemned it as inadequate. 'Narrow franchises and indirect elections failed to encourage in members a sense of responsibility to the people generally, and made it impossible, except in special constituencies, for those who had votes to use them with perception and effect . . . while governments found themselves far more exposed to questions and criticism than hitherto, questions and criticism were uninformed by a real sense of responsibility, such as comes from the prospect of having to assume office in turn.' The general result was that 'Parliamentary usages have been initiated and adopted in the councils up to the point where they cause the maximum of friction, but short of that at which by having a real sanction behind them they begin to do good'. These views did not go unchallenged, and many considered that the Montagu-Chelmsford Report was misleading both in its estimate of what the Morley-Minto reforms had achieved and in its disbelief in their future. But there can be no clearer evidence of the rapidly accelerated pace of the Indian constitutional movement in our time than the fact that reforms, which in 1909 seemed even to many Indian politicians to exceed their utmost expectations, ten years later were regarded as merely a transitory and halting step on the path of progress.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CORONATION DURBAR. THE MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REPORT

LORD MINTO was succeeded by Sir Charles Hardinge, Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who, on his elevation to the peerage, took the title of Lord Hardinge of Penshurst. In his period of office still further changes took place in the political state of Tibet owing to the outbreak of the revolution in China. In 1911 the Chinese garrison, deprived of all pay and supplies from Pekin, mutinied, plundered the treasury in Lhasa, and were finally expelled by the Tibetans. The Dalai Lama seized the opportunity to return to his capital after two years' of exile. He entered into an understanding with the Chinese Resident that the latter should continue to reside in Lhasa, attended only by a bodyguard for his personal protection, and that he should no longer claim power over the general administration. Upon this a fresh decree was issued at Pekin restoring to the Lama all his old powers and privileges. In 1912 there were constant rumours that China was making preparations to reconquer the country. The British government made it clear to the Chinese authorities that, though they were willing to acknowledge the suzerainty of China over Tibet, they would strongly oppose the reduction of the country to the position of a mere province of the Chinese empire. A settlement of the question was made in 1913 and 1914 by a conference of Tibetan and Chinese delegates at Simla and Delhi, under the presidency of the Foreign Secretary to the government of India. The strange story

of our dealings with Tibet and its ruler ends with the offer of the Dalai Lama to send us assistance in the Great War of 1914.

In Lord Hardinge's viceroyalty a delicate and difficult question of imperial politics came to the forefront, namely the attitude of the self-governing Colonies, and especially South Africa, towards Indian immigration. Asiatics were not welcomed in South Africa, and in 1913 the Union government passed a law limiting the facilities for immigration, and prohibiting them from trading, farming, or holding real property in the Orange Free State. The act naturally caused the deepest indignation in India; 'the people', says Sir Charles Roe, 'could not understand why the civil and political rights enjoyed by them so fully in India and in England should be denied to them in other parts of the empire, or why the government they had been accustomed to regard as all-powerful should tolerate a policy so opposed to its own principles. They could hardly be expected to realize how delicate and difficult is the task of interfering even by suggestion in the action of the self-governing colonies.'[1] In South Africa the Indian coolies adopted a policy of passive resistance. About 2,500 under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi marched into the Transvaal from Natal to assert their right to go from one province to another. Gandhi and other leaders were arrested. Strikes occurred in various parts of the country accompanied by some loss of life in collision with the military. Lord Hardinge won great popularity for the Indian government, but added something to the embarrassment of the Imperial Cabinet, by a strong speech at Madras in criticism of the South African Ministry. He protested against the position of Indians in South Africa, showed his sympathy for the passive resistance movement, and censured the Immigration Act as 'invidious and unjust'. He declared that the Union

[1] Annual Register.

Government of South Africa could only justify itself in the eyes of the world by appointing a Committee of Inquiry and allowing Indians to take part in it. Constitutional purists pointed out with some force that the imperial government was properly the only channel of communication between the different governments of the Empire, but the speech, notwithstanding much criticism, produced the desired effect. The South African government in the end appointed a commission, the Indian leaders were released from prison to prepare their case, and though at first they were inclined to boycott the commission, they ultimately appeared before it. An Act was passed, which, though it did not entirely satisfy Indian aspirations, was pronounced by Mr. Gandhi to be the Magna Carta of Indian liberty in South Africa.

South Africa at least admitted Asiatics under restrictions however hard. Canada and British Columbia declined to receive them at all. Certain Indian leaders, as a kind of concrete protest, chartered the steamship *Komagata Maru* to convey three hundred Indians, mostly Sikhs, to Vancouver. They were not allowed to enter the colony and were obliged after some trouble to return to Calcutta, where there was an unfortunate collision with the police on their disembarkation.

In May 1910 King George V, on the death of Edward VII, had succeeded to the throne of Great Britain. The Coronation in Westminster Abbey took place on June 22. The King had determined on the advice of his ministers to create an entirely new precedent by proceeding himself with the Queen to India at the close of the year, in order to preside at a great Coronation Durbar, and receive in person the homage both of the great officials of State and the protected Princes of the Indian Empire. In the absence of His Majesty four 'Counsellors of State' were appointed to transact the formal business of the throne, namely Prince Arthur of Connaught, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the

Lord Chancellor, and the Lord President of the Council, who happened at that time to be Lord Morley of Blackburn. All matters of high importance were communicated to the King daily by telegraph. As the King's suite included the Marquess of Crewe, the Secretary of State for India, the extraordinary spectacle was presented of the King-Emperor, the head of the India Office, and the occupant of the vice-regal throne being all on Indian soil together. The grand Durbar was held at Delhi on December 12 before a vast assembly of about 80,000 people. Certain imperial boons were announced including grants of land, a month's extra pay for soldiers and subordinate civil servants, the allotment of fifty lacs of rupees for the education of the people, and the declaration of the eligibility of Indians for the Victoria Cross. Then followed the announcement of changes of far greater magnitude, the secret of which had been extraordinarily well kept. These were the transference of the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi, the creation of a Governor-in-Council for Bengal—a change associated with the reunion of Eastern Bengal with the old province, the creation of a new Lieutenant-Governorship of Bihar, Orissa, and Chota Nagpur, and the reduction of Assam once more to a Chief-Commissionership. These changes were striking and dramatic. The transfer of the capital had no doubt many theoretical and logical advantages; it was defended by the government on the ground that the consolidation of British rule in India and the development of the railway system made it no longer necessary for the seat of government to be upon the sea-board. The Viceroy henceforward would be increasingly concerned with matters of purely imperial interest, and the subordinate provincial governorships would become more autonomous in their administration. Delhi from its central position, and its historical associations was obviously the best fitted city in India for the capital of a quasi-federal empire. The reunion of

Bengal was said to be 'not a reversal of the partition but a rearrangement after experience'—a statement hardly consistent with the facts. The appointment of a Governor of Bengal, as we have seen, had long been a favourite notion with the advanced Indian party.

These political experiments were naturally submitted to criticism, and first of all the method of initiating them was called in question. The changes were ultimately to be enacted by Act of Parliament, but as their announcement had been put in the mouth of the King-Emperor speaking *ex cathedra* from his Indian throne, it was impossible for Parliament to go back upon them without fatally damaging the prestige of the Crown. The widely-held view that they should have been first submitted to Parliament was not unreasonable. If such momentous reforms could be carried by the executive on its own authority, it would be difficult to imagine any circumstances in which the legislature would have to be consulted. That this enhancement of the Prerogative was the work of a Liberal government, normally supposed to be jealous of any encroachment on Parliamentary privileges, only added to the embarrassment both of their supporters who were expected to acquiesce, and their opponents who would gladly have demurred. Economists objected to the cost of transforming Delhi into a capital adequate to the rather exacting needs of the imperial government. The expenditure was originally forecasted as £4,000,000, but revised estimates revealed the fact that the sum would probably amount to half as much again. To dethrone a great capital city is an invidious task. Round Calcutta had gathered all the most hallowed traditions of British India since the days of Job Charnock, and our national prejudices are little in sympathy with such dramatic strokes of constitutional experiment. It was held by many that the trouble aroused by the Partition had subsided, that it was a grave error to reopen the question, and finally that

the government had made a concession to the agitators—always a doubtful policy—and what was worse, had gone out of their way to do so when such a step was in no sense necessary.

The outbreak of the European war in August 1914 revealed a deep and splendid loyalty to the British empire on the part of the princes and peoples of India, and although in the preceding year, during the Balkan war, the Moslem leaders had declared that Great Britain was committing a serious blunder in leaving Turkey to her fate, their loyalty to their suzerain did not quail even when Germany dragged the Porte into her alliance. Indian troops fought side by side with those of the self-governing colonies on the battle-fields of France, Flanders, Macedonia, Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. To the events of that world-wide conflict we cannot refer here. They are too recent, and too much obscured by controversy to be the fit subject of historical treatment. We can only briefly chronicle some of the political results which followed from the war, and indicate in outline the tremendous changes that are impending over the whole constitution of our Eastern empire. The supreme issues involved in the struggle dwarfed many questions that had aroused implacable passions in the past. One subordinate result of the war was the removal of the old Indian grievance (so often referred to in these pages) of the cotton duties, because, owing to the exigencies of war finance, the import duties on cotton goods were raised to the general level of seven and a half per cent. *ad valorem*, without any enhancement of the countervailing duty on the product of Indian mills. Protests from Manchester were not indeed wanting, but they went unregarded in the clash of arms. More important was the place allotted to India in the councils of the confederated and embattled empire. Two Indian representatives, the Maharaja of Bikanir and Sir Satyendra Sinha, took part together with Sir James Meston in the imperial war conference in London in the spring of

1917 and afterwards in the Peace Conference. In the reconstruction of the coalition government following the general election of 1918 Sir Satyendra Sinha was made Under-Secretary for India and elevated to the peerage under the title of Lord Sinha of Calcutta.

These results, striking as they are, fall into insignificance when compared with other changes. On August 20, 1917, Mr. E. S. Montagu, the Secretary of State, made the most momentous announcement on British policy since the passing of India under the control of the Crown. He enunciated four principles for future guidance. The first was 'the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration'. The second, 'the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British empire'. The third laid it down 'that progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages', and the fourth, that the Home government in conjunction with the government of India 'on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of the Indian people, must be judges of the time and measure of each advance'—an advance which will be determined by 'the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed on the sense of responsibility of the Indian peoples.'

Following this announcement the Secretary of State proceeded to India to consult with Lord Chelmsford, who had succeeded Lord Hardinge as Viceroy in 1916. On his return a voluminous Report was published, which, after a wide historical survey of the whole political problem of India, proceeded to state certain proposals for reform recommended by the Viceroy and the Secretary of State to the imperial government for adoption. The most important was that in the Provincial governments the departments should be divided into two sections, 'the reserved' and the 'transferred'. The 'reserved' subjects will continue for the present as heretofore to be managed by an executive responsible to the British Secretary of State for India. The

'transferred' subjects will be handed over to ministers responsible to enlarged legislative councils elected by a franchise as broad as should be found possible. It is contemplated that as time goes on the distinction between 'transferred' and 'reserved' subjects shall disappear and that all departments shall be under the control of ministers responsible to Indian electorates. The new system, if it prove successful on the experimental ground of the provincial governments, shall ultimately be extended to the Supreme government, which, however, at present is to be responsible only to the Secretary of State and to Parliament. It was also recommended that for the Viceroy's legislative council there should be substituted a bi-cameral system consisting of a Council of State of fifty members with an official majority and an Indian Legislative Assembly two thirds of which were to be elected members; that an Indian Privy Council should be established 'as a means of honouring and employing ripe wisdom or meritorious service' and also a Council of Princes to form a link between the provinces under British administration and the native States. Finally, it was suggested that after five years the government of India should hold an inquiry into the operation of the changes and that Parliament should appoint periodic commissions at intervals, say, of twelve years, to consider when and how the next step in advance should be taken.

At the time of writing (October 1919) the Government of India Bill has yet to be passed, but there seems little doubt that it will become law substantially as described. Many judges whose opinion is deserving of the highest respect strongly dissent from the new policy. But we must in fairness admit the force of the argument that by implication we are committed, from the whole trend of our policy since 1858, to advance on some such lines, while since the historic declaration of August 20, 1917, we are so pledged unreservedly. The policy was deliberately adopted by a coalition government composed of representatives of all the great parties in the state. It was not seriously challenged by any

prominent statesman. 'To reverse it', says Sir Valentine Chirol, 'would be regarded, and reasonably regarded, in India as a breach of faith which would do more to shake the foundations of British rule than would the worst consequences which its gloomiest critics foresee from persistence in it'.[1] It has too been widely felt that the generous and magnificent fidelity of the Indian peoples in the terrible crisis of the war calls for an equally generous trust from the suzerain power. But it would be folly to deny that the risks are great. The 'dyarchy' of the double executive is open to almost every theoretical objection that the armoury of political philosophy can supply. The soil for the sowing of the new seed is not altogether favourable. There are, no doubt, many thousands of loyal Indians prepared to give the new constitution a fair and honest trial, but there are also subversive forces working beneath the surface of society. The revelations of the Rowlatt Report issued in July 1918 proved beyond possibility of cavil the existence of a widely spread and most dangerous revolutionary movement partly fostered and manipulated by men of extreme opinions living in France and America. Even the moderate progressive party are inclined to regard the reforms as incomplete. Yet they definitely engraft upon the Indian system that Parliamentary government which only nine years before so staunch a Liberal as Lord Morley had vizualized as an ideal scarcely capable of realization till many generations had passed. 'We have now', he wrote, 'as it were before us in that vast congeries of peoples we call India a long, slow march in uneven stages through all the centuries from the fifth to the twentieth.' No country, to which such words could be applied, can be an easy subject for experiments in democracy Time alone can reveal whether future ages will acclaim the Montagu-Chelmsford policy as a constructive act of wise and prescient statesmanship or denounce it as a colossal betrayal of the noblest traditions of British rule in India.

[1] In the *Quarterly Review*, October 1918.

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